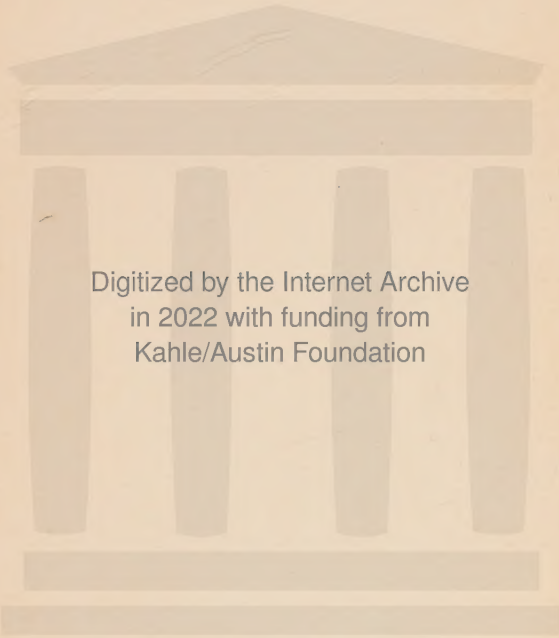




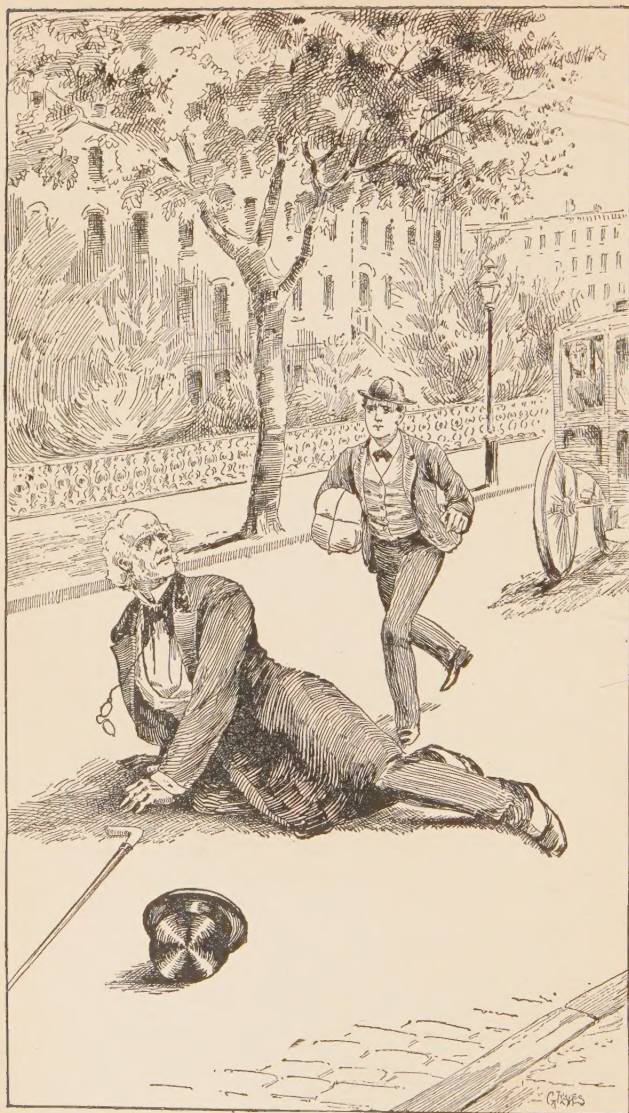
FRANK FOWLER, THE CASH BOY



Horatio Alger Jr.



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"FRANK OBSERVED THE ACCIDENT AND SPRANG QUICKLY TO HIS HELP."
[See page 76.]

FRANK FOWLER,

THE CASH BOY.

BY HORATIO ALGER, JR.,

Author of

"Joe's Luck," "Abner Holden's Bound Boy," "Ragged Dick," "Luck and Pluck," "Tony, the Tramp," etc., etc.

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FRANK FOWLER,

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CHAPTER I.

WHO SHALL BE CAPTAIN?



GROUP of boys were assembled in an open field to the west of the public school-house in the town of Crawford. Most of them held bats in their hands, while two, stationed sixty feet distant from each other, were "having a catch." It was easy to see that a common interest in the national game of base-ball had drawn them together. It was a holiday, and they proposed to spend it in playing their favorite game.

But there was an extra interest attached to the present gathering. Tom Pinkerton, son of Deacon Pinkerton, had just returned from a visit to his mother's cousin in the city of Brooklyn, and while there had witnessed a match game between two professional clubs. He had, besides, become acquainted with the forms of organization among boys' clubs, and on his return he proposed that the boys of Crawford should establish a club, to be known as the Excelsior Club, of Crawford, to play among themselves, and on suitable occasions to challenge

clubs belonging to other villages. This proposal was received with instant approval. The ambition of the Crawford boys was aroused. They wanted to win local renown; and on the very first Saturday afternoon following they met as already described.

"I move that Tom Pinkerton address the meeting," said one boy, who had picked up a little parliamentary language at the town meetings, occasionally held.

"Second the motion," said another.

As there was no chairman, James Briggs was appointed to that position, and put the motion, which was unanimously carried.

Tom Pinkerton, who was in his own estimation a personage of considerable importance, came forward in a consequential manner, and commenced as follows:

"Mr. Chairman and boys."

"Gentlemen," suggested Henry Scott.

Tom frowned, but did not profit by the suggestion.

"You all know what has brought us together. We want to start a club for playing base-ball, like the big clubs they have in Brooklyn and New York."

"How shall we do it?" asked Henry Scott.

"We must first appoint a captain of the club, who will have power to assign the members to their different positions. Of course you will want one that understands about these matters."

"He means himself," whispered Henry Scott to his next neighbor. And here he was right, for Tom did unquestionably expect the leading position, not alone because he was the one to propose the plan, but because

he thought himself to be the best player present. Modesty was not one of Tom's failings.

"Is that all?" asked Sam Pomeroy.

"No; there will be some expenses. There must be a treasurer to receive and take care of the funds."

"I am the boy for that office," said Sam humorously.

"I can take care of all the money you'll bring along."

"You'd take too good care of it, Sam," said Henry Scott.

"That's so!" chimed in several others, laughing.

"I always knew republics were ungrateful," returned Sam, with mock indignation. "'Slander loves a shining mark.'"

"You stole that from the writing-book," said Henry Scott. "What other office do we want to fill, Tom?"

"We shall need a secretary to keep the records of the club, and write and answer challenges. I believe that is all."

"Boys," said the chairman, "you have heard Tom Pinkerton's remarks. Those who are in favor of organizing a club on this plan will please signify it in the usual way."

All the boys raised their hands, and it was declared a vote.

"You will bring in your votes for captain," said the chairman.

Tom Pinkerton drew a little apart with a conscious look, as he supposed of course that no one but himself would be thought of as leader. But he reckoned without his host. He was an arrogant and self-conceited

boy, and far from popular. He assumed so much that his companions were not inclined to accept him at his own valuation, although his father was a leading citizen of Crawford.

Slips of paper were passed around, and the boys began to prepare their ballots. They were brought to the chairman in a hat, and he forthwith took them out and began to count them.

"Boys," he announced, amid a universal stillness, "there is one vote for Sam Pomeroy, one for Eugene Morton, and the rest are for Frank Fowler, who is elected."

There was a clapping of hands, in which Tom Pinkerton did not join. He stood apart, surprise and indignation struggling for the mastery. He had himself voted for Sam Pomeroy, who, perhaps, of all the boys was the most unfit for captain, and who therefore received Tom's vote because there was no possible chance of his election.

Frank Fowler, who is to be our hero, came forward a little, and spoke modestly as follows:

"Boys, I thank you for appointing me captain of the club. I am afraid I am not very well qualified for the place, but I will do as well as I can."

The speaker was a boy of fourteen. He was of medium height for his age, strong and sturdy in build, and with a frank, prepossessing countenance and an open, cordial manner which made him a general favorite. It was not, however, to his popularity that he owed his election, but to the fact that both at the bat and in

the field he excelled all the boys, and therefore was the best suited to take the lead. He was neatly but coarsely dressed, and on the knee of his pants there was a patch, of which he did not seem to be ashamed. The fact was that Mrs. Fowler was in very straightened circumstances, and Frank readily and cheerfully conformed himself to her limited means and did all he could to lighten the burden of his mother's poverty.

"Captain Fowler," said the chairman, "I will yield my place to you."

"I would rather you would keep your place till the rest of the officers are elected," said Frank.

The boys now proceeded to make choice of a treasurer and a secretary. For the first position Tom Pinkerton received a majority of the votes. Though not popular, it was felt that some office was due to him, and there was no particular responsibility attached to the office of treasurer, as it was not likely that the funds of the club would at any time amount to a large sum.

Though Tom felt that he had been wronged in being passed over for the first office, he condescended to accept the position of treasurer, but his thanks were very briefly expressed. For secretary, Ike Stanton, who excelled in penmanship, was elected, and thus all the offices were filled.

The boys now crowded around Frank Fowler, with petitions for such places as they desired.

"Make me pitcher, Frank," said Sam Pomeroy.

"Make you pitcher?" said Frank, smiling. "Why, you can't pitch, Sam."

"Can't I though? I can pitch a mile over your head."

"That's what I am afraid of," said Frank. "I hope you will give me a little time, before I decide about positions, boys," he said. "I want to consider a little."

"All right! Take till next week," said one and another, "and let us have a scrub game this afternoon."

"That's a good plan," said Frank. "I am agreed if the rest of you are."

"Where's the other nine to play against?" asked Sam.

"There are twelve boys here, we will divide in two clubs of six each, and have a game."

"I'll be captain of one club," said Sam.

"A pretty captain you'll make!"

Finally Eugene Morton was elected to lead the opposition, and the game was played, resulting in a victory of Frank Fowler's six. It may be mentioned that Tom Pinkerton was selected by Frank to play on his side, but he expressed a wish to play with the other party. He was not willing to acknowledge the leadership of his rival.

The boys were in the middle of the sixth inning, when some one called out to Frank Fowler, "Frank, your sister is running across the field, I think she wants you."

Frank dropped his bat and hastened to meet his sister.

"What's the matter, Gracie?" he asked in alarm.

"Oh, Frank!" she exclaimed, bursting into tears.

“Mother’s been bleeding at the lungs, and she looks so white, I’m afraid she’s very sick.”

“Boys,” said Frank, turning to his companions, “I must go home at once. You can get some one to take my place, my mother is very sick.”

“Of course, Frank, don’t mind the game.”

Our hero lost no time, but hurried to the humble home, over which the shadow of a great misfortune was already hovering.

CHAPTER II.

A REVELATION.



WHEN Frank reached the little brown cottage which he called home, he found his mother in an exhausted state reclining on the bed. She was very pale, as was natural from the loss of so much blood, but a faint smile lighted up her face as Frank entered the room.

"How do you feel, mother?" asked our hero anxiously.

"Quite weak, Frank," she answered in a low voice.

"I have had a severe attack."

"When did it come on?"

"An hour ago."

"Let me go for the doctor, mother."

"I don't think it will be necessary, Frank. The attack is over, and I need no medicines, only time to bring back my strength."

"You must not do anything, mother. Grace and I can attend to all the work that needs to be done. Promise me."

"I will promise not to exert myself till I feel stronger, Frank."

"And that will be a week, certainly."

"Not so long as that, I hope."

But three days passed, and Mrs. Fowler's nervous

prostration continued. She had had attacks previously, from which she rallied sooner, and her present weakness induced serious misgivings as to whether she would ever recover. Frank thought that her eyes followed him with more than ordinary anxiety, and after convincing himself that this was the case, he drew near to his mother's bedside, and inquired, "Mother, isn't there something you want me to do?"

"Nothing, I believe, Frank."

"I thought you looked at me as if you wanted to say something."

Mrs. Fowler looked thoughtful, even a little agitated, and she made a long pause before answering, then her voice was low and hesitating.

"There is something I must say to you before I die, Frank."

"Before you die, mother!" echoed Frank in a startled voice.

"Yes, Frank, I am beginning to think that this is my last sickness."

"Don't say that, mother," said Frank, shocked and grieved at this disclosure.

"The truth must be told at some time, and that soon."

"But, mother, you have been so before, and got up again."

"There must always be a last time, Frank, and my strength is too far reduced to rally again I fear."

"It is because you don't eat enough. You want some good beefsteak. That will give you strength."

“ You don’t realize my weakness, Frank. How should you, with all the strength of youth in your limbs? But I can judge better. There is consumption in our family. Two sisters and a brother—the last younger than myself—have already fallen victims to it, and I feel that my turn must come next.”

“ I can’t bear the thought of losing you, mother,” said Frank, deeply moved.

“ You will miss me then, Frank?” said Mrs. Fowler wistfully.

“ Shall I not? Grace and I will be alone in the world.”

“ Alone in the world!” repeated the sick woman sorrowfully, “ with little help to hope for from man, for I shall leave you nothing. Poor children!” and there was a deep sadness in her voice.

“ That isn’t what I think of,” said Frank hastily. “ I am not afraid about getting along,” and he straightened up his boyish form manfully. “ I can support myself.”

“ But Grace? She is a delicate girl,” said the mother anxiously. “ She cannot make her way as you can.”

“ She won’t need to,” said Frank promptly. “ I shall take care of her.”

“ But you are very young even to support yourself. You are only fourteen.”

“ I know it, mother, but I am strong, and I am not afraid. There are a hundred ways of making a living.”

“ But do you realize that you will have to start with absolutely nothing. Deacon Pinkerton holds a mortgage on this house for all it will bring in the market, and I owe him arrears of interest besides.”

“I didn’t know that, mother, but it doesn’t frighten me.”

“And you will take care of Grace?”

“I promise it, mother.”

“Suppose Grace were not your sister,” said the sick woman, anxiously scanning the face of the boy.

“What makes you suppose such a thing as that, mother? Of course she is my sister.”

“But suppose she were not,” persisted Mrs. Fowler, still fixing her eyes on the earnest face of the boy, “you would not recall your promise?”

“No, surely not, for I love her. But why do you talk so, mother?” and a suspicion crossed Frank’s mind that his mother’s intellect might be wandering.

She breathed a sigh, but it was a sigh of relief.

“Thank you for saying that, Frank. It relieves my mind.”

“Why should it relieve your mind, mother?” said the boy, perplexed. “There is no question about Grace being my sister.”

Again Mrs. Fowler paused—paused in indecision. Then she spoke:

“It is time to tell you all, Frank,” she said. “Sit down by the bedside, and I will gather my strength to tell you what must be told. But first give me a glass of water.”

The wondering boy brought a glass of water from the table near by, and seated himself by the bedside, as the sick woman had requested. He listened eagerly for his mother’s first words, but when they came, they started him from his seat in surprise.

“ Grace is not your sister, Frank!”

“ Not my sister, mother?” he exclaimed. “ You are not in earnest?”

“ I am quite in earnest, Frank.”

“ Then whose child is she?”

“ She is my child.”

“ Then she must be my sister—are not you my mother?”

It was not a question, but only a matter of fact statement, brought forward by way of argument—what then was Frank’s astonishment when the sick woman answered:

“ No, Frank, I am not your mother!”

CHAPTER III.

MRS. FOWLER'S STORY.



IF ANY of my readers will for a moment fancy such a revelation made to himself, it will help him to conceive of our hero's surprise when he heard this declaration. From the earliest years of which he had any recollection he had regarded Grace as his sister and Mrs. Fowler as his mother, and he had loved them as such. To have this belief dissipated was to set him afloat on a sea of conjecture without chart or compass.

"Not my mother!" he exclaimed in a tone in which there was something almost of incredulity mingled with surprise. "Who then is my mother?"

"I cannot tell you, Frank. I never knew. You will forgive me for concealing this from you for so long."

Frank answered warmly:

"No matter who was my real mother since I have you. You have been a mother to me, and I shall always think of you as such."

"You make me happy, Frank, when you say that. And you will look upon Grace as a sister also, will you not?"

"Always," said the boy emphatically.

"And you will protect her as an elder brother?"

"I will."

“Poor child! she will need your protection when I am gone.”

Again Frank’s mind returned to the disclosure which had just been made, and he said:

“Mother, will you tell all you know about me? I don’t know what to think. Now that I am not your son I cannot rest till I learn who I am.”

“I can understand your feelings, Frank, but I must defer the explanation till to-morrow. I have fatigued myself with talking, but to-morrow you shall know all that I can tell you.”

“Forgive me for not thinking of your being tired, mother.”

“You were always kind, always considerate, Frank. You must believe that, though you are not my son, I have always regarded you and loved you as such.”

“I know it,” said Frank, and he lent over and pressed his lips upon the cheek of the sick woman.

“But don’t talk any more. Wait till to-morrow.”

In the afternoon Frank had a call from Sam Pomeroy.

“The club is to play to-morrow afternoon against a picked nine, Frank,” he said. “Will you be there?”

Frank shook his head.

“I can’t, Sam,” he answered. “My mother is very sick, and it is my duty to stay at home with her.”

“We shall miss you—that is, all of us but one. Tom Pinkerton said yesterday that you ought to resign, as you can’t attend to your duties. He wouldn’t object to filling your place, I fancy.”

“He is welcome to the place as soon as the club feels like electing him,” said Frank.

"That won't be very soon. In the first place, he isn't much of a player, though he thinks he is, and the next thing is, nobody likes him. He puts on too many airs."

"He knows his father has money."

"That's the thing. That's why he swells round with his nose in the air, as if he were turning it up at everybody."

"I see you don't admire him," said Frank, smiling. "Tell the boys I am sorry I can't be on hand. They had better get you to fill my place."

"I'll mention it, but I don't think they'll see it in that light. They're all jealous of my superior playing," said Sam humorously. "Well, good-by, Frank. I hope your mother'll be better soon."

"Thank you, Sam," answered Frank soberly. "I hope so, too, but she is very sick."

The next day Mrs. Fowler again called Frank to the bedside.

"Grace is gone out on an errand," she said, "and I can find no better time for telling you what I know about you, and the circumstances which led to my assuming the charge of you."

"Are you strong enough, mother?"

"Yes, Frank, but even if I were not it would still be my duty to tell you, as I fear I shall never be stronger. I suppose you know that we have not always lived here."

"I have heard you say so, but I can remember no other home."

"You were but eighteen months old when we moved

here, and it was on your account that the removal took place."

"On my account?"

"Yes; you will understand why when my story is told."

"You once lived in Brooklyn, did you not, mother?"

"Yes, Frank. Thirteen years ago my husband and myself occupied a small tenement in that part of the city known as Gowanus, not far from Greenwood Cemetery. My husband was a carpenter, and though his wages were small he was generally employed, as at that time there was considerable activity in the building trade in that part of Brooklyn, though it was still quite country-like. We had been married three years, but had no children of our own. Our expenses were small, and we got on very comfortably, and should have continued to do so, but that Mr. Fowler met with an accident which partially disabled him. He fell from a high scaffolding and broke his arm. This was set, and he was soon able to work again, but he must also have met with some internal injury, for his full strength never returned. Half a day's work tired him more than a whole day's work formerly had done. Of course our income was very much diminished, and we were obliged to economize very closely. This preyed upon my husband's mind, and seeing his anxiety I set about considering how I could help him, and earn my share of the expenses.

"One day in looking over the advertising columns of a New York paper I saw the following advertisement:

“‘FOR ADOPTION.—A healthy male infant. The parents are able to pay liberally for the child’s maintenance, but circumstances compel them to delegate the care to another. Address for interview A. M.’

“‘I had no sooner read this advertisement than I felt that it was just what I wanted. We had no children, but had often wished for one. It would make our home brighter and more cheerful. Besides a liberal compensation was promised, and under our present circumstances would be welcome, as it was urgently needed. I mentioned the matter to my husband, and though he hesitated because of its increasing my cares, he was finally induced to give his consent.

“‘Accordingly I replied to the advertisement.

“‘Three days passed in which I heard nothing from it. I concluded that there had been numerous applications, and that a decision had been made in favor of some one else. But as we were sitting at the supper table at six o’clock one afternoon, there came a knock at our front door. I opened it, and saw before me a tall stranger, a man of about thirty-five, of dark complexion, and dark whiskers. He was well dressed, and evidently a gentleman in station.

“‘‘Is this Mrs. Fowler?’ he asked.

“‘‘Yes, sir,’ I answered in some surprise, for I could not imagine what business he could have with me.

“‘‘Then may I beg permission to enter your house for a few minutes? I have something to say to you.’

“‘Still wondering, I led the way into the sitting-room, where your father—where Mr. Fowler——’

"Call him my father—I know no other," said Frank, noticing the correction.

"Where your father was seated.

" 'This is my husband, sir,' I said.

"The stranger bowed, but did not offer his hand.

" 'You have answered an advertisement,' he said.

" 'Yes, sir,' I replied, beginning to understand now on what business he had come.

" 'I am A. M.,' was his next announcement. 'Of course I have received many letters, but on the whole I was led to consider yours most favorably. I have made inquiries about you in the neighborhood, and the answers have been satisfactory. You have no children of your own?'

" 'No, sir.'

" 'All the better. You will be able to give more attention to this child.'

" 'Is it yours, sir?' I asked.

" 'Ye-es,' he answered with hesitation. 'Circumstances,' he continued, 'circumstances which I need not state, compel me to separate from it. Five hundred dollars a year will be paid for its maintenance.'

" 'Five hundred dollars! I heard this with joy, for it was considerably more than my husband was able to earn since his accident. It would make us comfortable at once, and your father might work when he pleased, without feeling any anxiety about our coming to want.

" 'Will that sum be satisfactory?' asked the stranger.

" 'It is very liberal,' I answered.

" 'I intended it to be so,' he said. 'Since there is no

difficulty on this score, I am inclined to intrust you with the care of the child. But I must make two conditions.'

" 'What are they, sir?'

" 'In the first place, you must not try to find out the friends of the child. They do not desire to be known. Of course, that is none of your business, but some persons have a curious and prying disposition.'

" 'That has never been said of us,' I answered. Still I confess I did feel some curiosity as to who my strange visitor was.

" 'Then I suppose we shall be able to agree so far. Another thing, you must move from Brooklyn.'

" 'Move from Brooklyn.'

" 'Yes,' he answered firmly. 'Again I do not think it necessary to give you a reason for this condition. Enough that it is imperative. If you decline, our negotiations are at an end.'

" I looked at my husband. He seemed as much surprised as I was.

" 'Perhaps you will wish to consult together,' suggested our visitor. 'If so, I can give you twenty minutes. I will remain in this room while you go out and talk it over.'

" We acted on this hint, and went out into the kitchen. We decided that though we should prefer to live in Brooklyn, it would be worth our while to make the sacrifice for the sake of the addition to our income. We came in at the end of ten minutes, and announced our decision. Our visitor seemed pleased.

“ ‘Where would you wish us to move?’ asked your father.

“ ‘I do not care to designate any particular place. I should prefer some small country town, from fifty to a hundred miles distant. I suppose you will be able to move soon?’

“ ‘Yes, sir; we will make it a point to do so.’

“ ‘That is well,’ he answered, seeming well satisfied.

“ ‘How soon will the child be placed in our hands? Shall we send for it?’

“ ‘No, no,’ he said hastily, not without something in his tone that seemed like suspicion. ‘I cannot tell you exactly when, but it will be brought here probably in the course of a day or two. I shall myself bring it, and if at that time you wish to say anything additional, you can do so.’

“ ‘He went away, leaving us surprised and somewhat excited at the change that was to take place in our lives. The next evening the sound of wheels was heard, and a hack stopped at our gate. The same gentleman descended hurriedly with a child in his arms—you were that child, Frank—and entered the house.

“ ‘This is the child,’ he said, placing it in my arms. ‘And here is the first quarterly installment of your pay. Three months hence you will receive the same sum from my agent in New York. Here is his address,’ and he placed a card in my hands. ‘Have you anything to ask?’

“ ‘Suppose I wish to communicate with you respecting the child? Suppose he is sick?’

“ ‘Then write to A. M., care of Giles Warner, No. — Nassau Street. By the way, it will be necessary for you to send him your post-office address after your removal, in order that he may send you your quarterly dues.’

“ ‘With this he left us, entered the hack, and drove off. *I have never seen him since!*’

CHAPTER IV.

LEFT ALONE.



FRANK listened to this revelation with wonder.

For the first time in his life he asked himself, "Who am I?"

Never in the past had he doubted that Mrs. Fowler was his mother, and he still felt for her a son's affection. But now there dawned upon him the discovery that he had all his life been under a mistake. He did not even know who he was. He was not entitled to the name he bore.

"How came I by my name, mother?" he asked.

"I must tell you. After the sudden departure of the gentleman who brought you, we happened to think that we had not asked your name. We accordingly wrote to the address which had been given us, making the inquiry. In return we received a slip of paper containing these words: 'The name is immaterial; give him any name you please. A. M.'"

"Have you got that paper?" asked Frank, interested.

"Yes; I was going to destroy it, but your father said no. Look in the upper drawer of my bureau, and you will find it in an old wallet that belonged to Mr. Fowler.

Frank was curious to see the only link that remained to connect him with the past. He followed the direction of the sick woman, and brought out the wallet.

The paper, somewhat stained by time, was a half-sheet of ordinary note paper. The handwriting was plain and the letters clearly defined.

“May I keep this, mother?” he asked.

“Certainly, Frank.”

“You gave me the name of Frank.”

“It was Mr. Fowler’s name. We should have given it to you had you been our own boy; as the choice was left to us, we selected that.”

“It suits me as well as any other. How soon did you leave Brooklyn, mother?”

“In a week we had made all arrangements, and removed to this place. It is a small place, but it furnished as much work as my husband was able to do. With the help of the allowance for your support, we not only got on comfortably, but saved up a hundred and fifty dollars annually, which we deposited in a savings bank. But after five years the money stopped coming. It was the year 1857, the year of the great panic, and among others who failed was Giles Warner’s agent, from whom we had received our payments. Mr. Fowler went to New York to inquire about it, but only learned that Mr. Warner, weighed down by his troubles, had committed suicide, leaving no clue to the name of the man who left you with us.”

“How long ago was that, mother?”

“Seven years ago—nearly eight.”

“And you continued to keep me, though the payments stopped?”

“Certainly. You were as dear to us as our own child

—for we now had a child of our own—Grace. We should as soon have thought of casting off her as you.”

“But you must have been poor, mother.”

“We missed the allowance, but, as I told you, we had saved up a part of it. We had six—nearly seven hundred dollars in the savings bank, for we had not touched the interest. We had to draw upon that, but we were economical, and we got along till your father died, three years ago. Since then it has been hard work.”

“I wish I had known this before,” said Frank thoughtfully.

“Why, Frank?”

“I have been to school when I ought to have been at work. I had no claim on you. You became poor in taking care of me.”

“Don’t think that, Frank. Though the payments continued but five years they amounted to more than all you have cost us.”

“You have had a hard time, mother.”

“No harder on your account. You have been a great comfort to me, Frank. I am only anxious for the future. I fear you and Grace will suffer after I am gone.”

“Don’t fear, mother, I am young and strong. I am not afraid to face the world with God’s help.”

“That’s right, Frank. Don’t lean too much on your own strength; look up always to God. He will strengthen and uphold you. He is ‘a very present help in time of trouble.’”

"I know it, mother. Let us both trust in Him."

After a little pause, Frank said: "I am afraid you have already talked more than enough, but there is one question I would like to ask. Was there nothing that came with me, nothing to show who I am?"

"I came near forgetting to tell you. There was a little gold locket suspended from your neck by a ribbon. It was small and old-fashioned, and there was no picture in it. It was not customary for a locket to be worn by so small a child, and I was surprised to see it. But I have kept it, and I will give it to you. You will find it in a small wooden box in the corner of the upper bureau drawer."

Frank sought for it, and readily found it in the place indicated.

It was as Mrs. Fowler had said, small and old-fashioned. Probably the intrinsic value was small, but Frank looked at it with a strange interest. It was, except the paper, the only link between his early and present life. It had perhaps belonged to his mother, his real mother, whom he had never known. Would he ever know her, or was she no longer on this earth?

"What are you thinking of, Frank?" asked Mrs. Fowler, noticing the boy's fixed look.

"Mother," he said earnestly, "I mean to seek for that man you have told me of. I want to find out who I am. Do you think he was my father?"

"He said he was, but I do not believe it. He spoke with hesitation, and said this to deceive us probably."

"I am glad you think so. I would not like to think

him my father. From what you have told me of him I am sure I would not like him."

"I did not like him myself," said Mrs. Fowler. "I can't tell why, but there was something about him that repelled me, besides, I remember just how he looked, and you bear no resemblance to him."

"I wonder if I shall ever meet him?" said Frank meditatively.

"He must be nearly fifty now—dark complexion, with dark hair and whiskers. I am afraid that description will not help you any. There are many men who look like that. I should know him by his expression, but I cannot describe that to you."

Here Mrs. Fowler was seized with a fit of coughing, and Frank begged her to say no more.

"You have tired yourself with talking, mother," he said.

"I feel relieved," she said, "for I have told you all."

At this moment Grace entered the room. She was a pretty girl of eleven years, with a sweet expression that gained her friends among all.

"How do you feel, mother?" she asked, approaching the bedside.

"A little tired, my darling."

"Mother has been talking too much. We had better let her rest now," said Frank, and standing by the side of Grace he put his arm around her neck.

Mrs. Fowler saw the act, and understood that Frank meant to confirm to her his promise to care for and protect Grace in the dark days that were to come. She smiled, and Frank knew that she understood him.

Two days later, and Mrs. Fowler was no better. She was failing rapidly, and no hope was entertained that she would rally. She herself felt that death was near at hand, and told Frank so, but he found it hard to believe.

On the second of the two days, as he was returning from the village store with an orange for his mother, he was overtaken by Sam Pomeroy.

"Is your mother very sick, Frank?" he asked.

"Yes, Sam, I'm afraid she won't live."

"Is it so bad as that? I do believe," he added with sudden change of tone, "Tom Pinkerton is the meanest boy I ever knew."

"What has he done?"

"He is trying to get your place as captain of the baseball club."

"I suppose he wants it. That doesn't make him so very mean."

"It isn't that. It's what he says."

"What does he say?"

"He says that if your mother doesn't live, you will have to go to the poor-house, for you won't have any money, and that it will be a disgrace for the club to have a captain from the poor-house."

"Did he say that?" asked Frank indignantly.

"Yes."

"When he tells you that, you may say that I shall never go to the poor-house."

"He says his father is going to put you and your sister there."

"All the Deacon Pinkertons in the world can never make me go to the poor-house!" said Frank resolutely.

"That's the way to talk, Frank. What will you do?"

"I don't know, but I won't do that."

"Bully for you, Frank! I knew you had spunk."

Frank hurried home. As he entered the little house, a neighbor's wife, who had been watching with his mother, came to meet him.

"Frank," she said gravely, "you must prepare yourself for sad news. While you were out, your mother had another hemorrhage, and—and——"

"Is she dead?" asked the boy—his face very pale.

"*She is dead!*"

CHAPTER V.

THE TOWN AUTOCRAT.



HE WIDDER Fowler is defunct," remarked Deacon Pinkerton at the supper table.

"What's that?" asked Tom.

"She is dead. Don't you understand good English?" said his father.

"Law, deacon," said Mrs. Pinkerton, who was not so far advanced in education as her dignified husband. "You do use such outlandish words, no wonder Tom don't understand 'em."

"I wish, Mrs. Pinkerton, you and Thomas would take pattern by me, and strive to converse elegantly."

"I'll try, husband. When did she defunk?"

Here Tom burst into a roar of laughter, and the deacon observed:

"I think, Jane, on the whole you had better adhere to common words. There is no such word as defunk."

"Didn't you use it?"

"I said defunct, which is different. The widder died this afternoon."

"I suppose she won't leave anything?"

"No. I hold a mortgage on her furniture and **that** is all she has."

"What will become of the children?"

"As I observed day before yesterday they will be constrained to find a refuge in the poor-house."

"That's a pity," said Mrs. Pinkerton, who was kind-hearted.

"It is the best place for them. They will not be pampered by luxurious food, but will have plain sustenance, which will be better for them."

"What do you think Sam Pomeroy told me, father?"

"I am unable to conjecture what Samuel would be likely to observe, my son."

"He observed that Frank Fowler said he wouldn't go to the poor-house."

"Ahem!" coughed the deacon. "The boy will not be consulted."

"You see, he's as proud as—as he can be. It's enough to make a fellow sick to see what airs he puts on."

"Now he always seemed to me like a nice boy," said Mrs. Pinkerton.

"Well, *I* don't like him," said Tom positively. "He's always putting himself forward. Last week he got the boys to make him captain of the base-ball club, when I was the one that formed it. Maybe they won't like it so well when their captain has to go to the poor-house."

"It is no sin to be poor," said Mrs. Pinkerton.

"But of course a common pauper can't expect to associate with other boys on equal terms."

"Ahem! I agree with Thomas," said the deacon, who had a high opinion of himself and his social position.

"The boy should be kept in his place."

"That's what I say, father," said Tom, who desired to

obtain his father's co-operation. "You'll make him go to the poor-house, won't you?"

"I shall undoubtedly exercise my authority, if it should be necessary, my son."

"He told Sam Pomeroy that all the Deacon Pinkertons in the world couldn't make him go to the poor-house."

"Did he make that remark, Thomas?"

"Yes; Sam told me so himself. He said he guessed you would find it hard work to drive him."

"I will constrain him," said the deacon, in some excitement, for he had a very high idea of his own position, and was angry when his authority was called in question.

"I would if I were you, father," said Tom, elated at the effect of his words. "Just teach him a lesson."

"Really, deacon, you mustn't be too hard upon the poor boy," said his better-hearted wife. "He's got trouble enough on him."

"I will only constrain him for his good, Jane. In the poor-house he will be well provided for."

"You wouldn't want Tom to go to the poor-house."

"That is a different matter."

"I should think it was," said Tom indignantly. "I ain't a pauper."

"You might be if your father should die and leave you no money."

"I wouldn't go to the poor-house."

"That's the way Frank Fowler feels."

"He's a poor boy."

“Suppose you were a poor boy.”

“I’m different from him.”

In this Tom was right, but whether this difference was in his favor may be doubted. However, Tom wasn’t strong on logic, and as long as his father was on his side he did not feel it necessary to be. He had a very decided conviction that he was made of better clay than common boys, an idea which is shared by a good many boys whose fathers happen to be richer than their neighbors. It happens sometimes that riches take to themselves wings, and then the superiority is not so manifest.

Tom was reassured by his father’s declaration that Frank would be compelled to go to the poor-house. Such a disposition of our hero would be agreeable to Tom for two reasons. First, it would gratify his spite, for he heartily disliked Frank. Second, it would remove his rivalry. For, argued Tom, if he is in the poor-house, the boys will be ashamed to have him captain, and he will be forced to resign. If he doesn’t, he will be kicked out. Then, of course, they will take me, as they ought to have done in the first place.

So Tom was on the whole pleased with the approaching humiliation of his rival, and his own consequent advancement.

Meanwhile another conversation respecting our hero and his fortunes was held at Sam Pomeroy’s home. It was not as handsome as the deacon’s, for Mr. Pomeroy was a poor man, but it was a happy one nevertheless, and Mr. Pomeroy, limited as were his means, was far more liberal than the deacon.

"I pity Frank Fowler," said Sam, who was warm-hearted and sympathetic, and a strong friend of Frank.

"I don't know what he will do."

"I suppose his mother left nothing."

"I understand," said Mr. Pomeroy, "that Deacon Pinkerton holds a mortgage on her furniture."

"The deacon wants to send Frank and his sister to the poor-house."

"That would be a pity."

"I should think so; but Frank says he won't go?"

"I am afraid there isn't anything else for him. To be sure he may get a chance to work in a shop or on a farm, but Grace can't support herself."

"Father, I want to ask you a favor."

"What is it, Sam?"

"Won't you invite Frank and his sister to come and stay here a week?"

"Just as your mother says."

"I say yes. The poor children will be quite welcome. If we were rich enough they might stay with us all the time."

"Deacon Pinkerton is rich enough."

"The deacon isn't one of the liberal kind. It isn't want of money with him."

"Tom's going to be just like him. None of the boys like him. He goes strutting round as if he thought he was better than any one else. But his pride got a fall the other day."

"How was that?"

"He wanted to be captain of the base-ball club, but

the boys elected Frank Fowler instead. Frank is a great favorite."

"I should think he might be. He seems to be a good and manly boy."

"That's what he is. It is a shame that such a boy should go to the poor-house. Tom wants him to go, hoping that the boys will be discontented with having a captain from the poor-house. But even if Frank lost his position Tom wouldn't be any better off. The boys wouldn't elect him, though he thinks they would."

"When Frank comes here I will talk over his affairs with him," said Mr. Pomeroy. "Perhaps we can think of some plan for him."

"I wish you could, father."

"In the meantime you can invite him and Grace to come and stay with us a week, or a fortnight. Shall we say a fortnight, wife?"

"With all my heart."

"All right, father. Thank you."

Sam lost no time in seeing Frank. Our young hero was so overcome by sorrow for his mother's death that he had not had much time to think of his own prospects. Time enough for that when the funeral was over and the final separation had taken place.

Sam delivered the invitation in a way that showed how strongly his own feelings were enlisted in favor of its acceptance. Frank grasped his hand.

"Thank you, Sam, you are a true friend," he said. "I hadn't begun to think of what we were to do, Grace and I."

“ You’ll come, won’t you?”

“ You are sure that it won’t trouble your mother, Sam?”

“ She is anxious to have you come.”

“ Then I’ll come. I haven’t formed any plans yet, but I must as soon—as soon as mother is buried.”

“ Father says he will see what can be done for you. You had better talk with him.”

“ I will, Sam. I think I can earn my living somehow. One thing I am determined about—I won’t go to the poor-house.”

CHAPTER VI.

FRANK DEFIES THE AUTOCRAT.



THE FUNERAL was over. Frank and Grace had looked their last upon their dearest earthly friend. Hand in hand they walked back to the little house, now their home no longer. They were to pack up a little bundle of clothes, and go over to Mr. Pomeroy's in time for supper. But it was only three o'clock, and they had over two hours to make their small preparations.

When Frank had made up his bundle, urged by some impulse, he opened a drawer in his mother's bureau. His mind was full of the story she had told him, and he thought it just possible that he might find something to throw additional light upon his past history. While exploring the contents of the drawer he came to a letter directed to him in his mother's well-known handwriting. He opened it hastily, and with a feeling of solemnity, for it was a message to him from the dead. He read as follows:

“MY DEAR FRANK: In the lower drawer, wrapped in a piece of brown paper, you will find two gold eagles, worth twenty dollars. You will need them when I am gone. Use them for Grace and yourself. You will wonder how I came by them. Years ago I had a brother who followed the sea; he was ten years older than I. After one of his voyages he gave me them as a present.

He was always generous—poor Joe! He told me to keep them for a rainy day. I have kept them by me ever since, never using them; I saved these for my children. Take them, Frank, for I have nothing else to give you. The furniture will pay the debt I owe Deacon Pinkerton. There ought to be something over, but I think he will take all. I wish I had more to leave you, dear Frank, but the God of the fatherless will watch over you—to Him I commit you and Grace. Your affectionate mother,

RUTH FOWLER."

Frank was deeply moved as he read this last message from the one whom he should always regard as a mother. What matter if no tie of blood united them—the sacred bond of affection made them mother and son!

Frank, following the instructions of the letter, found the gold pieces and put them carefully into his pocket-book. He did not mention the letter to Grace at present, for he knew not but Deacon Pinkerton might lay claim to the money to satisfy his debt if he knew it, and he was amply secured in another way.

"I am ready, Frank," said Grace, entering the room. "Shall we go?"

"Yes, Grace. There is no use in stopping here any longer."

As he spoke he heard the outer door open, and a minute later Deacon Pinkerton entered the room.

The deacon was tall and rigid, with a very stiff backbone, which gave him the air of a grenadier. As he walked through the village street, with slow and measured pace, he seemed to be continually saying:

"I am somebody of importance. I am Deacon Pinkerton. Stand out of my way."

None of the deacon's pompousness was abated as he entered the house and the room. Frank had never liked him, and, though a small matter, he was vexed that he had entered the house without the ceremony of knocking.

"I didn't hear you knock," he said.

"I didn't knock," said the deacon.

"So I thought," was Frank's significant reply.

"What do you mean?" demanded the deacon, slightly coloring.

"People usually knock when they enter other people's houses. I thought you might have knocked without our hearing it."

Frank and Grace were standing, and so was the deacon.

"Will you take a seat?" said our hero, with the air of master of the house.

"I intended to," said the deacon, not acknowledging his claim. "So your poor mother is gone?"

"Yes, sir," said Frank briefly.

He did not open his heart to the deacon's sympathy, for he very well knew it was false and not genuine.

"We must all die," said the deacon, feeling that it was incumbent on him to say something religious.

Frank made no answer.

"Ahem! your mother died poor. She left no property?"

"It was not her fault."

"Of course not. Did she mention that I had advanced her money on the furniture?"

“Yes, sir, she mentioned it.”

“I did it to oblige her. I advanced her more than it was worth, but she was a widder, and I didn’t want to be hard upon her.”

“I think the furniture will secure you from loss—she said it would.”

“I am not certain, but I did it to oblige her. I am glad she mentioned it. You might have thought it belonged to you.”

“My mother told me all about it, sir.”

“Ahem! You are in a sad condition. But you will be taken care of. You ought to be thankful that there is a home provided for those who have no means.”

“What home do you refer to, Deacon Pinkerton?” asked Frank, looking steadily in the face of his visitor.

“I mean the poor-house, which the town generously provides for those who cannot support themselves.”

This was the first intimation Grace had received of the possibility that they would be sent to such a home, and it frightened her.

“Oh, Frank!” she exclaimed, turning to our hero, on whom she was beginning to lean in place of the mother she had lost, “must we go to the poor-house?”

“No, Grace; don’t be frightened,” said Frank soothingly. “We will not go.”

“Frank Fowler,” said the deacon sternly, “cease to mislead your sister.”

“I am not misleading her, sir.”

“Did you not tell her that she would not be obliged to go to the poor-house?”

“Yes, sir.”

“After I had told you that such was to be your future abode?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Are you aware that I am overseer of the poor?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then what do you mean by resisting my authority?”

“You have no authority over us. We are not paupers,” and Frank lifted his head proudly, and looked steadily into the face of the deacon.

“What are you, then?” demanded the deacon.

“Willing to work,” returned Frank.

“And your sister?”

“I will take care of her,” and Frank threw an arm of protection around the waist of his sister, and in this attitude returned the deacon’s look.

“This is all nonsense, Frank Fowler,” said the latter angrily. “You are taking too much upon yourself.”

“I don’t think so, sir.

“You are a pauper, whether you admit it or not.”

“*I am not*,” said the boy, indignantly.

“Where is your money? Where is your property?”

“Here, sir,” said our hero, unclasping his sister and holding out his hands. “I have two strong hands, and they will help me make a living for my sister and myself.”

“I suppose,” said the deacon, with a sneer, “you would like to have the town give you a salary and live here in luxury?”

“I don’t expect it, and I wouldn’t accept it. I don’t want the town to do anything for me.”

"It strikes me that you are a very independent young man, not to say impertinent, in bidding defiance to the town authorities. You have not been properly respectful to ME."

"I wish to be respectful to everybody, but you want to force me into the poor-house."

"It is the proper place for you."

"I don't think so, sir."

"You can't support yourself."

"That remains to be seen."

"It would be a fitting punishment to leave you to starve."

"I am not afraid of that."

"May I ask whether you expect to live here and use *my* furniture?"

"No, sir. You may take it whenever you please."

"You must live somewhere. Where do you expect to sleep to-night? I shall not allow you to sleep on *my* bed."

"I do not intend to, sir. I shall ask no favors of you, neither for Grace nor myself. I am going to leave the house. I only came back to get a few clothes."

"Where are you going," asked the deacon, in amazement. Somehow he could not make out this boy.

"Mr. Pomeroy has invited Grace and me to stay at his house for a few days. I haven't decided what I shall do afterward."

"You will have to go to the poor-house then. I have no objection to your making this visit first. It will be a saving to the town."

“Then, sir, we will bid you good-day. Grace, let us go.”

“That boy is very much wanting in respect for the constituted authorities,” said the deacon to himself, as our hero led his sister out of the room. “His pride needs to be brought down. Thomas is right after all.”

And the deacon went through the house, examining the furniture in a dignified way, and assessing its value. Arriving at last at the comfortable conclusion that it would afford a handsome interest on the small sum of money he had advanced upon it.

CHAPTER VII.

A LITTLE MISUNDERSTANDING.



HAVE YOU carried Frank Fowler to the poor-house?" asked Tom Pinkerton eagerly, on his father's return.

"No."

"Why not?" asked Tom, disappointed.

"Ahem!" said the deacon, "he is going to make a visit at Mr. Pomeroy's first."

"But he will have to go afterward, won't he?"

"Undoubtedly."

"I shouldn't think you would have let him make a visit," said Tom discontentedly. "I should think you would have taken him to the poor-house right off."

"I feel it my duty to save the town unnecessary expense," said Deacon Pinkerton.

So Tom was compelled to rest satisfied with his father's assurance that the removal was only deferred. The deacon said nothing of Frank's defiant attitude. He was jealous of his own dignity, and was not willing to admit that his authority had been set at defiance. Besides he had no doubt that Frank would be obliged to yield in the end.

Meanwhile Frank and Grace received a cordial welcome at the house of Mr. Pomeroy. Sam and Frank were intimate friends, and our hero had been in the

habit of calling frequently, and it seemed home-like to him.

"I wish you could stay with us all the time, Frank—you and Grace," said Sam one evening.

"We should all like it," said Mr. Pomeroy, "but we cannot always have what we want. If I had it in my power to offer Frank any employment which it would be worth his while to follow, it might do. But he has got his way to make in the world. Have you formed any plans yet, Frank?"

"That is what I want to consult you about, Mr. Pomeroy."

"I will give you the best advice I can, Frank. I suppose you do not mean to stay in the village."

"No, sir. There is nothing for me to do here. I must go somewhere where I can make a living for Grace and myself."

"You've got a hard row to hoe, Frank," said Mr. Pomeroy thoughtfully. "Have you decided where to go?"

"Yes, sir. I shall go to New York."

"What! To the city?"

"Yes, sir."

"I don't know what to say about that. There are thousands there who can't get work. The *Tribune* advises those who want work to stay in the country, or go West—not to come to the city."

"Suppose Greeley had staid in the country himself," said Frank. "He has succeeded pretty well. If there had been any *Tribune* to advise him to stay at home, it would have been the worse for him."

“That is true, yet there is something in the advice.”

“I know it, but I think the trouble is sometimes with those out of work. I’ll get something to do, no matter what it is.”

“But how are you going to live in the meantime?”

“I’ve got a little money.”

“How much?”

“Twenty dollars.”

“That won’t last long.”

“I know it, but I shall soon get work, if it is only to black boots in the streets.”

“With that spirit, Frank, you will stand a fair chance to succeed. What do you mean to do with Grace?”

“I will take her with me.”

“I can think of a better plan. Leave her here till you have found something to do. Then send for her.”

“But if I leave her here Deacon Pinkerton will want to put her in the poor-house. I can’t bear to have Grace go there.”

“She need not. She can stay here with me for three months.”

“Will you let me pay her board?”

“I can afford to give her board for three months.”

“You are very kind, Mr. Pomeroy, but it wouldn’t be right for me to accept your kindness. It is my duty to take care of Grace.”

“I honor your independence, Frank. It shall be as you say. When you are able—mind, not till then—you may pay me at the rate of two dollars a week for Grace’s board.”

“Will that be enough, Mr. Pomeroy?”

“It will pay all the expense she will be to us, and I don’t want to make any profit out of you. We like Grace, and it will be pleasant for us to have her here—all except Sam.”

“Now, father!” expostulated Sam.

“I’ll take it back, then. I fancy Master Sam will like the arrangement as well as any one. But I positively forbid any elopement at present, until Sam has arrived at years of discretion.”

“You’re too hard on Sam,” said Mrs. Pomeroy. “He will have to wait till he is fifty for that.”

“I think you are a little harder than father.”

“Then,” said Frank, “if you are willing to board Grace for a while, I think I had better go to the city at once.”

“Wait a week, Frank,” said Sam.

“I should enjoy being with you, Sam, but I want to get to work at once.”

“Frank is right,” said Mr. Pomeroy. “He has got a hard task before him, and if he wants to set about it, I can’t say he is wrong.”

“I will look over your clothes to-morrow, Frank,” said Mrs. Pomeroy, “and see if they need mending.”

“Then I will start Thursday morning—the day after.”

There were some little things that Frank wanted to do before he left the village, for he did not know when he would again visit it. He hoped to find steady work in the great city to which he had decided to go, and he had made up his mind to ask no holiday, except it should be necessary to come for Grace.

About four o'clock the next afternoon he was walking up the main street, when just in front of Deacon Pinkerton's house he saw Tom leaning against a tree.

"How are you, Tom?" he said, and was about to pass on.

Tom did not fancy this salutation. It was entirely too free and easy for a pauper in addressing him. He would have said so, but he remembered that Frank was not yet in the poor-house, and he wanted to ask him a question or two besides.

"Where are you going?" he asked abruptly.

"To Mr. Pomeroy's."

"You're staying there, are you?"

"Yes."

"How soon are you going to the poor-house to live?"

Frank looked at Tom steadily for a moment, and then said quietly:

"What do you mean by that?"

"I thought I spoke plain enough," said Tom. "I asked you when you were going to the poor-house to live."

"Who told you I was going?"

"My father."

"Then your father's mistaken."

"I don't believe it. He said he let you make a visit at Mr. Pomeroy's, but as soon as that was over, you were going to the poor-house—you and your sister Grace."

"I say again, then, that your father is mistaken."

"More likely you are mistaken. My father's the overseer of the poor, and he knows all about the paupers."

"Very likely, but that has nothing to do with me."

"Ain't you a pauper?" said Tom insolently.

"No more than you are. If you want very particularly to know when I am going to the poor-house, it will be the week after you go to live there."

"Do you mean to insult me?" blustered Tom, who felt that his dignity had been outraged.

"Not at all. I was only answering your question. I am no more likely to go to the poor-house than you."

"You haven't got any money?"

"I have got hands to earn money."

"You can't earn your living."

"I am going to try."

"Anyway, I advise you to resign as captain of the base-ball club."

"Why?"

"Because if you don't you'll be kicked out."

"Who says so?"

"Of course you will. Do you think the fellows will be willing to have a pauper for their captain?"

"That's the second time you have called me a pauper. Don't call me so again."

"You are a pauper, and you know it."

Frank was not a quarrelsome boy, but this repeated insult was too much for him. He seized Tom by the collar, and tripping him up left him on the ground howling with rage. As valor was not his strong point, he resolved to be revenged upon Frank vicariously. He was unable to report the case to his father till the next morning, as the deacon did not return from a neighbor-

ing village, whither he had gone on business, till late, but the result of his communication was a call at Mr. Pomeroy's from the Deacon at nine o'clock the next morning. Had he found Frank it was his intention, at Tom's request, to take him at once to the poor-house. But he was too late. Our hero was already on his way to New York.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW TO PURLOIN A DINNER.



SO THIS is New York," said Frank to himself, as he emerged from the railway station and looked about him with interest and curiosity. He had never visited the great city, but had always wondered how it looked.

"Black yer boots? Shine?" asked a bootblack, seeing our hero standing still.

"How much do you charge?"

"Five cents."

This was before the general inflation of prices, which encouraged the boys engaged in this humble avocation to double their charge.

Frank looked at his shoes. They were dirty, without doubt, but he would not have felt disposed to be so extravagant, considering his limited resources, had he not felt it necessary to obtain some information about the city.

"Yes," he said, "you may black them."

The boy was on his knees instantly and at work.

"Do you get much to do?" asked Frank.

"Sometimes I do."

"How much do you make in a day?"

"When it's a good day I make a dollar."

"That's pretty good," said Frank. "You can save up money out of that."

"No, I can't. I give it all to my mother. Father's dead, and I have to help mother support the family."

"How old are you?"

"Thirteen."

"You're not so old as I am," said Frank thoughtfully.

"How old be you?"

"Almost fifteen. Can you show me the way to Broadway?"

"Go straight ahead."

Our hero paid for his boots and started in the direction indicated.

"If I can't do anything else I can support myself by blacking boots," he thought. "I shouldn't like it, but it's honest."

Frank's plans, so far as he had any, were to get into a store. He knew that Broadway was the principal business street in the city, and this was about all he did know about it. He thought that a boy would probably be wanted in some one of the many stores to be found there, and he intended to apply at once.

He reached the great thoroughfare in a few minutes, and was fortunate enough to find on the window of the corner store the sign:

"A Boy Wanted."

He entered at once, and going up to the counter addressed a young man, who was putting up some goods.

"Do you want a boy?"

"I don't."

"There's a sign in the window."

"All right. I believe the boss wants one; I don't. Go out to that desk."

Frank found the desk, and propounded the same question to a sandy-whiskered man, who looked up from his writing.

"You're prompt," he said. "That notice was only put out two minutes ago."

"I only saw it one minute ago."

"So you want the place, do you?"

"I should like it."

"Where do you live?"

"I am going to live in New York."

"Don't you live here now?"

"I have just come from the country."

"Do you know your way about the city?"

"No, sir, but I could soon find out."

"That won't do; we want a boy to carry out bundles. He must, of course, be familiar with the streets."

"I can buy a map of the city and soon find the way round."

"Can't wait till you learn. Here's another boy—where do you live?"

"East Ninth street."

"Do you know your way round the city?"

"Like a book."

"You see," said the merchant, addressing Frank, "there is no chance for you. I shall have plenty of applications from boys who live in the city, and are familiar with the streets."

Frank left the store rather discomfited. He began to see that he had one important disqualification for the post he wanted to fill.

“However,” he thought, “if they wanted me to sell goods, it wouldn’t make any difference whether I knew my way about or not.”

Reassured by this thought, he continued his quest for employment.

He soon came to another store where there was a similar notice of “A Boy Wanted.” It was a dry-goods store.

“Do you live with your parents?” was asked.

“My parents are dead,” said Frank sadly.

“Very sorry, but can’t take you.”

“Why not, sir.”

“In case you took anything we should make your parents responsible.”

“I shouldn’t take anything,” said Frank indignantly.

“You might. I can’t take you.”

Our hero left this store a little disheartened by his second rebuff. There seemed to be more obstacles to his success than he had anticipated. As he pursued his walk crowds met or passed him. Every one was walking briskly. Every one seemed to have something to do—every one but him. In one aspect this seemed discouraging, but Frank’s brave nature asserted itself. “If all these people can get a living, I ought to be able to,” he said to himself.

He made several more fruitless applications, but did not lose courage wholly. He was gaining an appetite, however. It was his usual dinner hour, and he had eaten less breakfast than usual. It is not surprising, therefore, that his attention was drawn to the bills of a

restaurant on the opposite side of the street. He crossed over, and standing outside, began to examine them to see what was the scale of prices. While in this position he was suddenly roused by a slap on the back.

Turning, he met the gaze of a young man of about thirty, who was smiling quite cordially.

"Why, Frank, my boy, how are you?" he said, offering his hand.

"Pretty well, thank you," said our hero, bewildered, for he had no recollection of the man who had called him by name.

The other smiled a little more broadly, and thought:

"It was a lucky guess; his name is Frank."

"I am delighted to hear it," he continued. "When did you reach the city?"

"This morning," said the unsuspecting Frank.

"Well, it's queer I happened to meet you so soon, isn't it? Going to stay long?"

"I shall, if I can get a place."

"Perhaps I can help you. What kind of a place do you want?"

"I want to get a place in a store. I wonder who he is?" This last, of course, to himself.

"I know a good many merchants and traders. Perhaps I can help you."

"You are very kind," said Frank.

"Oh, I should like to help for old acquaintance sake."

"I suppose I ought to remember you," ventured our hero, "but I can't think of your name."

“Jasper Wheelock. You don’t mean to say you don’t remember me?”

“I don’t think I do,” said Frank hesitating.

“Perhaps it isn’t strange, as we only met once or twice in your country home. But that doesn’t matter. I’m just as ready to help you. By the way, have you dined?”

“No.”

“No more have I. Come in and dine with me.”

As Frank was really hungry, he saw no reason why he should not accept the invitation. They entered the restaurant and seated themselves at a small side table.

“What’ll you take?” asked Jasper Wheelock, passing the bill of fare to Frank.

“I think I should like some roast beef,” said Frank, after a brief examination.

“That will suit me. Here, waiter, two plates of roast beef and two cups of coffee. You take coffee, don’t you?”

“Yes, sir; thank you.”

“This is a pretty good place,” said Jasper. “I often dine here, or rather, lunch. How are they all at home?”

“My mother has just died.”

“You don’t say so,” said Jasper sympathetically.

“My sister is well.”

“I forget your sister’s name.”

“Grace.”

“Of course—Grace. I find it hard to remember names. The fact is, I have been trying to recall your last name, but it’s gone from me.”

"Fowler."

"To be sure—Frank Fowler. How could I be so forgetful. Well, Frank, you must keep up your spirits. New York will make a man of you. Have you tried to get a place yet?"

"I've been in several places, but they wanted some one that lived with his parents and knew the way round the city."

"You'll need influence to get a place."

"Shall I?"

"Yes; but I'll help you—I know the ropes."

Frank didn't understand what it was to know the ropes, but judged from his companion's tone that it was something desirable. The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of the coffee and roast beef, which both he and his new friend attacked with vigor.

"What kind of pudding will you have?" asked the stranger.

"Apple dumpling," said Frank.

"That suits me. Apple dumpling for two."

In due time the apple dumpling was disposed of, and two checks were brought, amounting to seventy cents in all.

"I'll pay both," said Jasper. "No thanks. We are old acquaintances, you know."

He put his hands into his pocket, and quickly withdrew it with an exclamation of surprise.

"Well, if that isn't a good joke," he said. "I've left my money at home. I remember, now, I left it in the pocket of my other coat. *I shall have to borrow the money of you!* You may as well hand me a dollar!"

CHAPTER IX.

FRANK GETS A PLACE.



FRANK was not disposed to be suspicious, but the request for money made him uneasy. He supposed he must have met Jasper Wheelock before, otherwise how could the latter call him by name? But, for all that, he might forget or neglect to return the dollar, and to him it was a large sum. Still there seemed to be no way of refusing, and he reluctantly drew out the money.

His companion settled the bill, and then led the way into the street.

Jasper Wheelock was not very scrupulous. He was quite capable of borrowing money without intending to return it; but he had his good side. There was something in Frank's unfriended condition that appealed to his sympathies, and he resolved, contrary to his original purpose, to be a real friend to him.

"Frank," he said, as they found themselves in the street, "you have done me a favor, and I am going to help you in return. Have you got much money?"

"No. I had twenty dollars when I left home, but I had to pay my fare in the cars, and the dinner. I have seventeen dollars and a half left."

"Have you any one to supply you with more when this is gone?"

"No; I must work for it."

"Then it is necessary for you to get a place as soon as possible."

"Yes; I have a sister to support, too."

"Where is she?"

"In the country. Grace, you know."

"No, I don't know. The fact is, Frank, I have been imposing upon you."

"You have?" said Frank uneasily.

"I never saw you before in the whole course of my life."

"How did you know my name was Frank?"

"I guessed at it."

"What made you say you knew me?"

"I wanted to get a dinner out of you. Don't be troubled, though; I'll pay you back the money. I've been out of a place for three or four weeks, but I enter upon one the first of next week. I shall be in funds then. It would be mean to cheat a little fellow like you, and I won't do it. For the rest of the week I've got nothing to do, and I will try to get you a place. But first, have you got a boarding-place?"

"No."

"You'll have to get a cheap one. I don't know how you are going to earn enough to support yourself, let alone the girl. Why, you'll have to pay more board than you can earn."

"Is board so high in New York?" asked Frank disturbed.

"You can get board for all prices, but wages are low—for a boy like you."

“How much do you think I can earn?”

“You may possibly get four dollars a week.”

“Then, if I pay two dollars for Grace’s board it will leave me only two for myself. But perhaps I can get something extra to do.”

“The first thing is to get a room somewhere. I’ll tell you what, you may have part of of my room.”

“Is it expensive?”

“No; I pay a dollar and a half a week. I think the old lady won’t charge more than fifty cents extra for you.”

“Two dollars for both?”

“Yes.”

“Then my share would be a dollar.”

“You may pay only fifty cents. I’ll keep on paying what I do now.”

“But you’ll only have half a room then.”

“All the better. I get lonely. I shall be glad to have your company. If you like, I will go round with you now.”

“I should like to leave my bundle there.”

“Of course. You don’t want to carry round your trunk everywhere, like the elephant. This way. My room is on Sixth Avenue.”

“They had some distance to walk. Finally Jasper halted before a baker’s shop.

“It is over this,” he said.

He drew out a latch-key and entered. On the third floor was a small room with one window, which he entered.

"This is my den," he said. "It isn't large—you can't get anything better for the money."

"I shall be satisfied," said Frank.

"You can have one of the drawers in the bureau to put your duds in. It was some time before the old lady would give me a bureau, but she had to give in at last. Now I'll go down and see if I can make the arrangement with her."

He soon reappeared, saying:

"It's all right, Frank. She wanted two and a quarter, but I beat her down. Now, remember you've paid two weeks in advance. That'll pay up the dollar I owe you. Now, how much do you want to pay for meals?"

"I want to get along as cheap as I can."

"You can't afford to spend thirty-five cents every day for dinner?"

"No."

"Then I advise you to buy your breakfast in the baker-shop. For dinner I'll find you a cheaper restaurant. I've got to economize myself for a short time. After this week I shall earn fifteen dollars a week."

"Fifteen dollars a week!" repeated Frank, almost enviously. "I should feel rich on that."

And he reflected how handsomely he could get along on that sum, supporting not only himself but his sister.

"It seems a good deal to you, but I found it easy to spend it."

"On yourself?"

"I've got nobody dependent on me, but I used to

treat the fellows to cigars and drinks, and there wasn't much left at the end of the week."

"I should think you'd put some money in the savings bank."

"I ought to, but it isn't easy to keep from spending money when it's in your pocket. That's the reason, when I was thrown out of work that I had only two dollars to fall back upon. That's the reason I played you a mean trick."

"On the contrary, you have done me a great favor."

Jasper Wheelock looked pleased. He was really in earnest in his desire to help Frank, and it was pleasant to be appreciated.

"I hope I shall be able to, Frank," he said. "You can depend on my good intentions."

"What business are you in, Mr. Wheelock?"

"I am a journeyman printer. It is a very good business, and I generally have steady work. I expect to have after I get started again. Now, shall I give you some advice."

"I wish you would."

"You don't know your way around New York. I'll show you round. It will help you to get a place. Stay a moment. I believe I have a map somewhere. I'll just show you on it the position of the principal streets, and that will give you a clearer idea of where we go."

The map was found, and Jasper explained to Frank the leading topographical features of the Island City.

"You see," he said, "the avenues run north and south, and the cross streets run east and west. Them

in the upper part of the city are numbered regularly so that they are easy to find. Fifth Avenue is the dividing line between east and west."

We will not follow Jasper's explanation. It was clear and intelligible, and prepared our hero for taking his second lesson in the streets. At the end of a long walk, covering several miles, he felt that he had a good general idea of his new place of residence. One thing only was wanting now to make him contented, and this was employment. But it was too late to make any further inquiries. He made an economical supper, and at nine o'clock went to bed, feeling that he was making as much progress as could be expected.

"I've been thinking, Frank," said Jasper, the next morning, "that you might get the position of a cash boy."

"What does a cash boy do?"

"In large retail establishments every salesman keeps a book in which his sales are entered. He does not himself make change, for it would not do for so many to have access to the money-drawer. The money is carried to the cashier's desk by boys employed for the purpose, who return with the change."

"But I should think the cashier might steal if he wanted to."

"No, or his accounts would not come straight. The proprietor knows what the sales have been by the returns of the different salesmen, and any deficiency would be discovered at once."

"Do you think I can get a situation as cash boy?"

"I will try at Gilbert & Mack's. I know one of the principal salesmen. If there is a vacancy he will get it for you to oblige me."

"When shall we call?" asked our hero eagerly.

"We will go directly."

They entered a large retail store on Broadway. It was broad and spacious. Twenty salesmen stood behind the counter, and boys were running this way and that with small books in their hands.

"Those are the cash boys," said Jasper.

"They are smaller than I."

"There's one of your size. You are rather large for the business, but you need keep it only till something better turns up. How are you, Duncan!"

The person addressed was about Jasper Wheelock's age. He had a keen, energetic look and manner, and would be readily singled out as one of the leading clerks.

"All right, Wheelock. How are you?" he responded, rapidly rolling up a piece of goods from which a few yards had just been sold.

"I'm a gentleman of leisure for the rest of the week I go to work again Monday."

"Do you want anything in our line?"

"No goods; I want a place for this youngster."

"Your brother?"

"No; he's a friend of mine. I'll answer for his good character."

"That will be satisfactory. But what sort of a place does he want?"

"He is ready to begin as cash boy."

“Then we can oblige you, as one of our boys has fallen sick, and we have not supplied his place. But the wages are small.”

“How much?”

“Three dollars a week?”

“Can’t you give more?”

“Not a penny. We can get hundreds of boys for that.”

“What do you say, Frank?” asked Jasper.

“I’ll take the place if I can get it,” said our hero promptly.

“All right,” said Duncan. “I’ll speak to Mr. Gilbert. Does the boy live with his parents?”

“No, he lives with me.”

“That will answer probably.”

He went up to Mr. Gilbert, a portly man, in the back part of the store. Mr. Gilbert seemed to be asking two or three questions. Frank waited the result in suspense, dreading another disappointment, but this time he was fortunate.

“The boy can stay,” reported Duncan. “His wages are three dollars a week.”

It was not much, but Frank was well pleased to feel that at last he had a place in the city. It didn’t appear as yet how he was going to take care of Grace and himself out of this scanty pittance. That must be left to the future.

He wrote a letter to Grace in the evening announcing his success and expressing the hope that he would soon be able to send for her.

CHAPTER X.

THE CASH BOY.



OUR WEEKS passed. The duties of a cash boy are simple enough, and Frank had no difficulty in discharging them satisfactorily. Indeed he gave more than ordinary satisfaction, for he was prompt to hear a call, and quick to answer it, and through his alertness managed to get through fifty per cent. more work than most of the other cash boys. At first he found it tiresome, being on his feet all day, for the cash boys were not allowed to sit down, but he got used to this, being young and strong.

All this was very satisfactory, but one thing gave Frank uneasiness. His income was very inadequate to his wants. It would have been pretty hard to pay his own expenses out of one hundred and fifty-six dollars a year, and quite impossible to share anything toward his sister's board. Yet he had agreed to do this. He knew that Mr. Pomeroy was ill able to give Grace her board, nor would his independent feelings allow him to accept it. As to his sister's going to the poor-house, that was quite out of the question.

"What makes you so glum, Frank?" asked Jasper Wheelock one evening. By the way Jasper was now regularly at work, and influenced by his young roommate, had begun to lay aside part of his weekly wages.

Though in the outset he had proposed to cheat Frank out of a dinner he had proved afterward an excellent friend, and it was thus that Frank regarded him.

"Do I look glum?" said Frank. "I was only thinking."

"What were you thinking about?"

"How I could earn more money. You know how little I get. I can hardly take care of myself much less take care of Grace."

"I can lend you some money, Frank. Thanks to your good advice, I have got some laid up."

"Thank you, Jasper, but that wouldn't help matters. I should owe you the money, and I don't know how I could pay it."

"I wouldn't have you arrested for debt, Frank."

"I know you wouldn't, but it would make me uneasy if I owed money that I couldn't pay."

"The feeling does you credit, my boy. I am afraid I am not so conscientious, but I can respect those who are. About increasing your income, I really don't know what to say. I am afraid Gilbert & Mack wouldn't raise your wages."

"I don't expect it. All the rest of the cash boys would ask the same thing."

"True; still I know they are very well pleased with you."

"I am glad to hear that," said our hero.

"Duncan told me you did more work than any of the rest of the boys."

"I try to do all I can."

"He said you would make a good salesman, he thought, but of course you are too young for that yet."

"I suppose I am."

"So if you want to make some more, I am afraid you will have to look for it outside. Here's a very simple way of doing it. Suppose you pick up in the street a pocket-book full of bills, nobly resist the temptation of appropriating a thousand dollars odd to your own use, seek out the owner, and throw them at his feet, exclaiming proudly: 'I am poor, but honest.' Of course he would be affected to tears, would draw out five one-hundred-dollar bills, and compel you to take them as a reward for your honesty. The curtain falls over an affecting tableau. How would that suit you?"

"I should like it very well," said Frank laughing, "but where am I to pick up the lucky pocket-book?"

"I can't exactly tell you at present," said Jasper. "If I knew I should most probably be selfish enough to make tracks for it myself. I don't suppose it would pay to give up your situation and explore the streets in the hope of finding it. You might be as unlucky as the boot-black who found a wallet the other day and received *two cents* from the liberal owner."

"Did he accept it?"

"Oh, yes, he accepted it, informing the generous giver that he was going down to Wall Street to invest it in Erie stock."

"On the whole, Jasper, I think I must think of something else."

"Have you thought of anything?"

"You know our store closes at six o'clock. I have all my evenings. Why couldn't I get something to do in the evening?"

"Of course it is possible, but I am afraid there is very little chance. What can you do?"

"I have a very good handwriting. Some people want copying done, don't they?"

"Yes, but for every such case there are a hundred who are ready to do it. One of our authors, whose books are printed at our office, advertised in the papers for a copyist, and how many answers do you think he got?"

"I can't tell."

"A hundred and sixty-one. Two-thirds of these were from ladies. Of course a hundred and sixty were disappointed. You see, Frank, how good your chance is."

"I see I must think of something else."

"You might give public readings, Frank, or deliver lectures on temperance."

"I might if I could get you to go round with me as a frightful example of the effects of intemperance."

"That joke is stolen. I have heard it before."

"Perhaps it is; but, Jasper, it seems to me you are laughing at me instead of helping me."

"Then, Frank, I will be serious. I am earning fifteen dollars a week, you know, and I can get along on ten, but of the five I save let me give you two. I shall never feel it, and by-and-by when you are promoted it won't be necessary."

“Jasper, you are a true friend,” said Frank warmly; “but it wouldn’t be right for me to accept your kind offer, though I shan’t forget it. You’ve been a good friend to me.”

“And you to me, Frank.”

“I should like to be, but I haven’t had the power.”

“Yes you have, Frank. You’ve kept me at home when I should have been out in the streets loafing about wasting my health and spending my money. Before you came to room with me I spent every cent of my wages, and didn’t enjoy myself half as well as I do now.”

“Then it seems I can do a little good, Jasper. I am glad of it, for I owe my place to you, and my home. I shouldn’t have known where to go. Very likely I might not have got a situation yet.”

“That’s the way it ought to be, Frank. We ought to help each other. Then you won’t take what I offer you?”

“The two dollars a week?”

“Yes.”

“I’ll promise one thing, Jasper—if I borrow of any one, I’ll borrow of you. But I want to pay my way myself. I suppose, from what you say, it’ll be hard work getting work to do in the evening; but I won’t give up trying—something may turn up yet.”

“I’ll look out for you, Frank. Perhaps I may hear of something for you. Two heads are better than one, you know.”

Small as Frank’s income was, he managed to live

within it. It will be remembered that he paid but fifty cents a week for a room. By great economy he made his meals cost but two dollars a week, so that out of his three dollars he saved fifty cents. But this saving would not be sufficient to pay for his clothes. However, he had no occasion to buy any as yet, and his little fund altogether amounted to twenty dollars. Of this sum he inclosed eight dollars to Mr. Pomeroy to pay for four weeks' board for Grace.

“I hope I shall be able to keep it up,” he said to himself thoughtfully. “At any rate I’ve got money enough to pay for six weeks more. Before that time something may turn up.”

CHAPTER XI.

AN ADVENTURE.



SEVERAL days passed without showing Frank any way by which he could increase his income. Jasper again offered to give him two dollars a week out of his own wages, but this our hero steadily refused.

"No, Jasper," he said, "you will want it yourself. Put it in a savings bank, and some day you will find it useful."

"But I am afraid I shall spend it."

"Then it is your own fault."

"Are you too proud to accept help from me, Frank?"

"I would accept it from you as soon as anybody, Jasper, but I promised my mother to provide for Grace, and I want to do it myself. If I take the money from you to pay her board, I shouldn't be keeping my word."

"I think you are foolish, Frank."

"Then I'll promise to borrow the money of you if I find there is no way of earning it myself."

With this Jasper was forced to be contented. He was really attached to Frank, and wanted to help him even if it compelled him to make a sacrifice. The reader may think this inconsistent with the circumstances under which he was first introduced, but it must be remembered that all have a good side, and Frank

had developed the good that was in his companion. His was the stronger nature, and as such made its impress upon his companion.

One Friday evening, just as the store was about to close, the head salesman called Frank to him.

"Where do you live?" he asked.

"In Sixth Avenue, near Twenty-fifth Street."

"There's a bundle to go to Forty-sixth Street. I'll pay your fare upon the stage if you'll carry it."

"Certainly," said Frank promptly, for he was never afraid of a little extra trouble.

"I promised to send it to-night, and I don't like to disappoint the lady."

"I can carry it just as well as not."

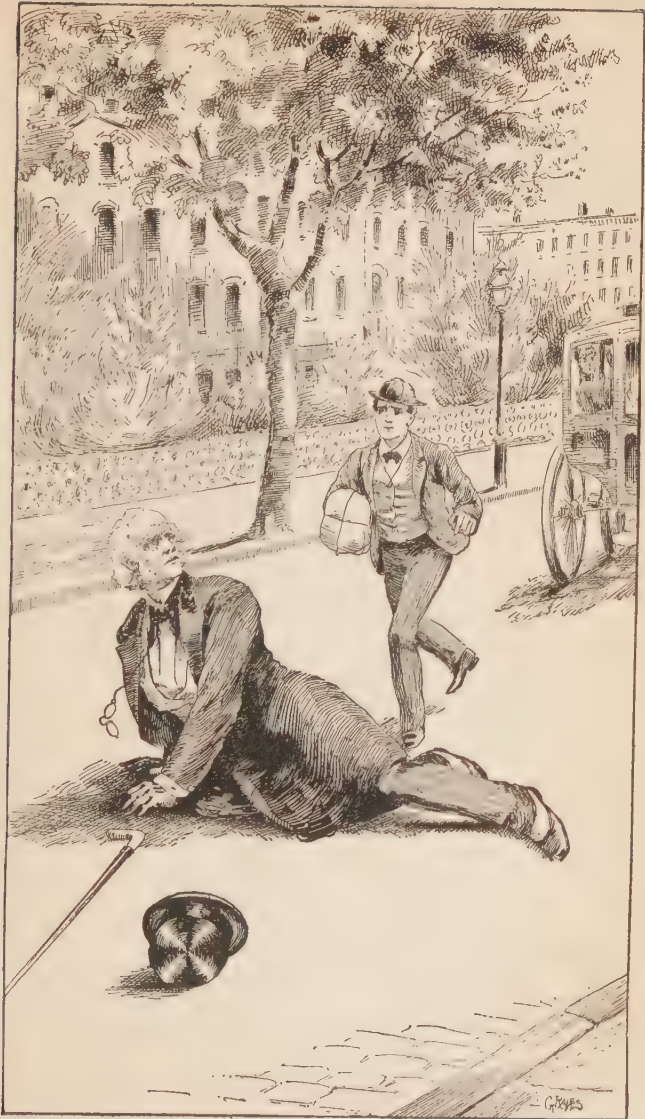
Frank took the bundle, and got on board a passing omnibus. There was just one seat vacant beside an old gentleman of seventy, who appeared to be quite feeble.

At Forty-fifth Street he pulled the strap and prepared to descend, leaning heavily on his cane as he did so. By some mischance the horses started a little too soon, and the old man, losing his footing, fell in the street. Frank observed the accident and sprung out instantly to his help.

"I hope you are not much hurt, sir?" he said hastily.

"I have hurt my knee," said the old gentleman, "and I was lame before. I fear I shall find it hard to walk."

"Let me assist you, sir," said Frank, helping him up and putting the cane in his hand. "There, sir, lean on me. Don't be afraid, I am strong."



"FRANK OBSERVED THE ACCIDENT AND SPRANG QUICKLY TO HIS HELP."

"Thank you, my boy, if it won't be too much for your strength."

"Oh, no, sir."

"I live at No. 45, close by. If you will lead me to the door and into the house, I shall be much indebted to you."

"Certainly, sir. It is no trouble to me."

With slow steps, supported by our hero, the old gentleman walked to his own door.

"Please ring the bell," he said.

Frank did so.

It was opened by a maid-servant, who looked with some surprise at Frank.

"I fell, Mary," explained her master, "and this young gentleman has kindly helped me home."

"Did you hurt yourself much, sir?"

"Not seriously."

"Can I do anything more for you, sir?" asked Frank.

"Come in a moment."

Our hero followed his new acquaintance into a handsomely furnished parlor.

"Now, my young friend, tell me if you have been taken out of your way by your attention to me?"

"Oh, no, sir. I was intending to get out at the next street."

"I judge from your bundle that you are employed in some store."

"Yes, sir. I am a cash boy in Gilbert & Mack's."

"My dinner is just ready. Won't you stop and dine with me?"

Frank was surprised at this unexpected invitation. From the elegant manner in which the room was furnished he judged that the old gentleman was wealthy. He was afraid of feeling out of place in such a mansion.

"Thank you, sir," he said, hesitating, "but I promised to carry this bundle. I believe it is wanted at once."

"So you shall. You say the house is in the next street. You can go and return in five minutes. Then come back. You have done me a service, and I may have it in my power to do something for you in return."

"Perhaps," thought Frank, "he can help me to some employment for my evenings." Then aloud: "Thank you, sir. I will come."

"Very well. I will order an extra plate for you. You won't forget my number?"

"No, sir."

Five minutes later Frank was ushered into a handsome dining-room. The dinner was already on the table, but chairs were only set for three. The one at the head of the table was of course occupied by the old gentleman, the one opposite by Mrs. Bradley, his house-keeper, and one at the side was placed for Frank.

"Mrs. Bradley," said the old gentleman, "this is a young gentleman who was kind enough to help me home after the accident of which I just spoke to you. I would mention his name, but I must leave that to him."

"Frank Fowler, sir."

"And my name is Wharton. Now that we are all introduced, we can talk more freely."

"Will you have some soup, Mr. Fowler?" asked the housekeeper.

She was a tall, thin woman, with a reserved manner that was somewhat repellent. She had only nodded slightly at the introduction, fixing her eyes coldly and searchingly on the face of our hero. It was evident that whatever impression the service rendered might have made upon the mind of Mr. Wharton, it was not calculated to warm the housekeeper to cordiality.

It sounded strange to Frank to be called Mr. Fowler. It was the first time in his life that he had been dignified by such a title.

"Thank you," he answered, but he could not help feeling at the same time that Mrs. Bradley was not a very agreeable woman.

"You ought to have a good appetite," said Mr. Wharton. "You have to work hard during the day."

"No, sir; not very hard, but I am on my feet all day."

"And, of course, that is tiresome."

"Our young friend is a cash boy with Gilbert & Mack, Mrs. Bradley."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mrs. Bradley, arching her brows, as much as to say: "You have invited strange company to dinner."

"Do your parents live in the city, Frank—I believe your name is Frank?"

"No, sir; they are dead."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Wharton sympathizingly. "You are indeed unfortunate. Have they been dead long?"

“My mother died only a few weeks since.”

“And have you no brothers and sisters?”

“I have one sister—Grace.”

“Is she older or younger than yourself?”

“She is two years younger.”

“Then you are not quite alone. I suppose she is in the city here with you?”

“No, sir. I left her in the country. I am here alone.”

“I will ask you more about yourself after dinner. If you have no engagement, I should like to have you stay with me a part of the evening.”

“Thank you, sir.”

Frank accepted the invitation, though he knew Jasper would wonder what had become of him. He saw that the old gentleman was kindly disposed toward him, and in his present circumstances he needed such a friend.

But in proportion as Mr. Wharton became more cordial, Mrs. Bradley became more frosty, until at last the old gentleman noticed her manner.

“Don’t you feel well this evening, Mrs. Bradley?” he asked.

“I have a little headache,” said the housekeeper coldly.

“I thought you seemed more quiet than usual.”

“It’s the headache, I suppose, sir.”

“You had better do something for it.”

“It will pass away of itself, sir.”

They rose from the dinner table, and Mr. Wharton, followed by Frank, ascended the staircase to the front

room on the second floor, which was handsomely fitted up as a library.

“What makes him take such notice of a mere cash boy?” said Mrs. Bradley to herself. “That boy reminds me of somebody. Who is it?”

CHAPTER XII.

AN UNEXPECTED ENGAGEMENT.



TAKE a seat, Frank," said Mr. Wharton, pointing to a luxurious arm-chair on one side of the cheerful grate-fire; "I will take the other, and you shall tell me all about yourself."

"Thank you, sir," said our hero, and as his glance wandered from one object to another, he thought it quite impossible to imagine anything more comfortable and luxurious than the well-appointed library in which, to his surprise, he found himself a guest. There was a library-table in the center of the room, over which was suspended a chandelier, with a drop, emitting a soft and steady light. On it were costly volumes, and writing materials. Handsome pictures looked down upon him from the walls. Book-cases were filled with elegant books. A thick carpet, with a rich, warm tint, covered the floor, and the whole clearly indicated wealth on the part of the owner.

His confidence was won by Mr. Wharton's kind tone, and he briefly recounted his story. He told about his mother's poverty and death, and how Grace and himself found themselves alone in the world, with only his arm between them and destitution. He related how he had fallen in with Jasper, and through his means obtained the position of cash boy. But there was one thing he

did not tell; he did not speak of his mother's death-bed revelation. It would do no good, he thought, and so Mr. Wharton remained in the dark as to the most important fact of his life.

At the conclusion, Mr. Wharton said:

"How old are you, Frank?"

"Fourteen, sir."

"And at this age you have not only undertaken to support yourself but your sister?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are a brave boy, and a good boy, and you deserve success."

"Thank you, sir."

"But I am bound to say that you have a hard task before you."

"I know it, sir."

"If now, it were only to support yourself, I think you could do it."

"I know it would be much easier, sir."

"Why not let your sister go to the poor-house for a few years, till you are older and better able to provide for her?"

Frank looked up indignantly, in spite of his respect for the old gentleman whose guest he was.

"I should be ashamed to do it, sir," he said. "I promised my mother to take care of Grace, and I will. I am willing to work hard, but I want to keep my promise."

Apparently Mr. Wharton was not offended by Frank's independence, for his tone was still kind as he asked:

“How much do you earn as a cash boy?”

“Three dollars a week.

“Only three dollars a week! Why, that won’t pay your own expenses!” said the old gentleman in surprise.

“Yes, sir, it does. I pay fifty cents a week for my room, and my meals don’t cost me much.”

“But you will want clothes.”

“I have enough for the present, and I am laying up fifty cents a week to buy more when I need them.”

“You can’t buy many for twenty-six dollars a year. But that doesn’t allow anything for your sister’s expenses.”

“That is what puzzles me, sir,” said Frank, fixing a troubled glance upon the fire. “I shall have to work in the evening for Grace.”

“Won’t that be too hard for you?”

“No, sir; but that isn’t the trouble. I haven’t found anything to do yet.”

“What can you do?”

“I could copy, but I suppose there isn’t much chance of getting copying to do.”

“Then you have a good handwriting?”

“Pretty fair, sir.”

“Let me see a specimen. There are pen and ink on the table, and here is a sheet of paper.”

Frank seated himself at the table and wrote his name on the paper.

“Very good,” said his host approvingly. “Your hand is good enough for a copyist, but you are correct in supposing that work of that kind is hard to get. Are you a good reader?”

“Do you mean in reading aloud, sir?”

“Yes.”

“I will try, if you wish.”

“Take a book from the table—any book—and let me hear you read.”

Frank opened the first book that came to hand—one of Irving’s—and read in a clear, unembarrassed voice about half a page.

“Very good, indeed!” said Mr. Wharton. “You must know that good reading is not so common an accomplishment as may be supposed. You have been well taught. Where did you attend school?”

“Only in the town school, sir.”

“You have at any rate made good use of your advantages.”

“But will it do me any good, sir?” asked Frank. “People are not paid for reading, are they?”

“Not in general, but we will suppose the case of a person whose eyes are weak, and likely to be badly affected by evening use. Then, suppose such a person could secure the services of a good, clear, distinct reader, don’t you think he would be willing to pay something?”

“I suppose so. Do you know of any such person?”

“I am describing myself, Frank. A year since I strained my eyes very severely, and have never dared to use them much since by gaslight. Mrs. Bradley, my housekeeper, has read to me some, but she has other duties, and I don’t think she enjoys it very much. Now, why shouldn’t I get you to read to me in the evening when you are not otherwise employed?”

"I wish you would, Mr. Wharton," said Frank eagerly. "I would do my best."

"I have no doubt of that, but there is another question—perhaps you would ask a higher salary than I could afford to pay."

Mr. Wharton spoke gravely, but there was a little twinkle in his eye which our hero did not observe.

"I wouldn't charge you much, sir," he said. "You may give me whatever you like."

"I would rather you would name your own price."

"Would a dollar a week be too much?" asked Frank hesitatingly.

"I don't think I could complain of that," said Mr. Wharton gravely. "Perhaps you would not think it enough."

"I shall be satisfied if you are," said Frank, though he could not help wishing Mr. Wharton would pay him two dollars, which would just pay the board of Grace in the country—then, by-and-by, when his wages were raised in the store, he would be able to pay for Grace's clothes as well as her board. However, reading would be easy work, and one dollar a week would be very welcome. He waited anxiously for Mr. Wharton's decision.

"Very well," said the old gentleman. "I think I will engage you as my reader."

"Thank you, sir."

"But about the pay—I shall insist upon paying more than a dollar a week."

Frank's heart beat high. Perhaps Mr. Wharton would agree to pay him two dollars.

"I have about made up my mind to pay you——"

Here he hesitated, and Frank listened eagerly.

"Five dollars a week."

Frank could hardly believe his ears. Was it possible that he was to receive five dollars a week just for reading an hour or two every evening? Why, added to his three dollars as cash boy, that would make his income eight dollars a week! It fairly took away his breath.

"*Five dollars a week!*" he repeated, almost incredulous.

"Will that satisfy you?" said Mr. Wharton, enjoying the surprise of his young protege.

"It is much more than my services will be worth, sir," said Frank.

"Let me judge of that, Frank. I am afraid you are too modest, and that isn't a common fault with young men of your age, or indeed with persons of my age."

"I don't know how to thank you, sir," said Frank gratefully. "I never expected to be so rich. I shall have no trouble in paying for Grace's board and clothes now."

"I almost envy you, my boy, your evident happiness. You will have to be economical even on eight dollars a week."

"I know it, sir, but I shall have no trouble now in doing what I promised mother. I began to be afraid I couldn't do it. When do you want me to begin reading to you?"

"You may as well begin to-night, that is, unless you have some other engagement."

“Oh, no, sir. I have nothing else to do.”

“Take the *Evening Post* then and read me the leading editorial. Afterward I will tell you what to read.”

Frank had been reading about half an hour when a knock was heard at the door.

“Come in,” said Mr. Wharton.

Mrs. Bradley entered with a soft, quiet step.

“I thought, sir,” she began, “you might like me to read to you as usual.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Bradley, but I am going to relieve you of that portion of your labors. My young friend here is to come every evening and read to me.”

“Indeed!” ejaculated the housekeeper in a tone of chilly displeasure, and a sharp glance at Frank, which indicated no great amount of cordiality. “Then, as I am intruding, I will take my leave.”

There was something in her tone that made Frank feel uncomfortable.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HOUSEKEEPER'S NEPHEW.



“Y NO means,” said Mr. Wharton, as the housekeeper was about to withdraw; “don’t imagine you are intruding. Come in and sit down, and Frank shall read to us both.”

“You won’t need me, sir.”

“But I shall be glad of your company. Bring your work, if you like.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Mrs. Bradley in a measured tone. “You are very considerate, I am sure, but if you’ll excuse me, I won’t come in this evening.”

“Any other evening, then, you will be welcome.”

Mrs. Bradley bowed, but did not reply.

“Mrs. Bradley has been with me a good many years,” explained Mr. Wharton, “and I dare say she feels a little disturbed at seeing another occupy her place, even in a duty like this.”

“I am afraid she will be offended with me, sir,” said Frank, who could not help seeing the unfriendly look with which she regarded him.

“Oh, no; I will explain matters to her. Go on with your reading, Frank.”

Soon afterward Mr. Wharton asked:

“Do you play checkers, Frank?”

“No, sir.”

"Then I will teach you. It is a favorite game of mine, and it will be a relief after reading so long. I tried to teach Mrs. Bradley, but she evidently didn't enjoy the game, and I gave it up."

At half-past nine, Mr. Wharton took out his watch.

"It is getting late," he said. "I have no doubt you are tired and need rest."

"I am not tired, sir."

"I believe in going to bed early. I shall seldom keep you later than this. Do you think you can find your way out?"

"Yes, sir. When shall I come to-morrow evening?"

"A little before eight."

"I will be punctual."

Though Frank realized that he was tired when he got out into the street, it was a feeling that he was glad to experience.

"Won't Jasper be surprised when he hears of my good luck?" he thought, as he hurried home.

Jasper was waiting up for him, not wholly without anxiety, for it was very unusual for Frank to be late.

"Well, Frank!" he exclaimed, "this is a pretty time for you to come home. I began to think you had got into trouble. I was just going round to the nearest station-house in search of you."

"I was in quite a different place, Jasper."

"Where were you?"

Frank told his story, including an account of his engagement.

"So it seems I am to lose your company in the even-

ing. I am sorry for that, but I am glad you are so lucky."

"It was better than I expected," said Frank, with satisfaction.

"I was afraid myself that you would find it hard to get any evening employment. That was a fortunate adventure of yours."

"So it was. Now, Jasper, there is something I want to ask your advice about."

"Go ahead."

"Don't you think I ought to bring my sister to the city now that I am able to take care of her?"

Jasper shook his head.

"Not if she is in a good place now."

"She is in an excellent family."

"Let her stay there then. Consider if she should come to New York she would hardly see anything of you. You are to be employed in the evening as well as during the day. In the meantime your sister would be alone, with no one to keep her company."

"I see you are right, Jasper; but I should like to see her."

"Why can't you go to your old home and spend some Sunday? You can come back by an early train on Monday morning."

"That is true. I think I will, by and by, when I feel a little richer."

"That will be the best way. You couldn't give your sister so good a home in the city as she has now, not to speak of the loneliness. What sort of a man is this Mr. Wharton?"

"He is very kind and generous. I am lucky to have so good a friend. There's only one thing that is likely to be disagreeable."

"What's that?"

"The housekeeper—her name is Mrs. Bradley—for some reason or other doesn't want me there."

"What makes you think so?"

"Her manner, and the way she speaks. She came in to read to Mr. Wharton last evening, and didn't seem to like it because I had been taken in her place."

"She is evidently jealous."

"I don't know; she has no reason to be."

"What sort of a looking woman is she?"

"She is tall, thin, and very cold in her manners."

"You must take care not to offend her. She might try to get you dismissed."

"I shall always treat her politely, but I don't think I can ever like her."

Meanwhile, the housekeeper on leaving the library had gone to her own room in dudgeon.

"Mr. Wharton's a fool!" she muttered to herself. "What possessed him to take this cash boy from the streets, invite him to dinner, and treat him as an honored guest, and finally to engage him as a reader? I never heard of anything so ridiculous? Is this little vagabond to take my place in the old man's good graces! I've been slaving and slaving for twenty years, and what have I got by it? I've laid up two thousand dollars; and what is that to provide for my old age? If the old man would die and remember me handsomely in his will, it

would be worth while; but this new favorite may stand in my way. If he does, I'll be revenged on him as sure as my name is Ulrica Bradley."

Here the area bell rang, and in a moment one of the housemaids entered Mrs. Bradley's room.

"There's your nephew outside, ma'am, and wanting to see you."

"Tell him to come in," and the housekeeper's cold face became softer and pleasanter in aspect as a young man of twenty entered and greeted her carelessly.

"How are you, aunt?"

"Pretty well, Thomas," she answered. "You haven't been here for some time."

"No. I've had a lot of work to do. Nothing but work, work, all the time," he grumbled. "I wish I was rich."

"You get through at six o'clock, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Then you have your evenings to yourself."

"That isn't much. A fellow wants a little fresh air."

"I hope you spend your evenings profitably, Thomas."

"I ain't likely to go on many sprints, aunt, if that's what you mean. I only get twelve dollars a week."

"I should think you might live on it."

"Starve, you mean. What's twelve dollars to a young fellow like me when he's got his board to pay, and has to dress like a gentleman?"

"You are not in debt, I hope, Thomas," said Mrs. Bradley uneasily.

"I owe for the suit I have on, and I don't know where I'm to get the money to pay for it."

He was dressed in a flashy style, not unlike what is popularly denominated a swell. His coarse features were disfigured with unhealthy blotches, and his outward appearance was hardly such as to recommend him. But to him alone the cold heart of the housekeeper was warm. He was her sister's son and her nearest relative. Her savings were destined for him, and in her attachment she was not conscious of his disagreeable characteristics. But, frugal and economical herself, she had been troubled by indications of her nephew's extravagance. She had occasionally given him a five-dollar bill to eke out what he termed his miserable pay, and now whenever he called he didn't spare hints that he was out of pocket, and that a further gift would be acceptable. Indeed, the only tie that bound him to his aunt was a mercenary one.

"The old girl has money," he said to one of his companions, "and I must be attentive. I wish she wasn't so confounded careful of it. I have to hint pretty hard before I can get a cent out of her."

But the housekeeper, sharp-sighted as she ordinarily was, did not detect the secret motive of such attention as she received from her nephew. She flattered herself that he really loved her, not suspecting that he was too selfish to love anybody but himself.

"Thomas," she said, with a sudden thought, "I may be able to help you to an increase of your income."

"I wish you would," muttered Thomas. "I need it enough. What is it?"

"Mr. Wharton needs somebody to read to him evenings. On my recommendation he might take you."

"Thank you, aunt, but I don't see it. I don't want to be worked to death. I work hard enough in the daytime without working evenings too."

"But think, Thomas," said his aunt earnestly. "He is very rich. He might take a fancy to you and remember you in his will."

"I wish somebody would remember me in his will."

"Then try to please him."

"Do you really think there's any chance of the old boy's doing something handsome for me?"

"That depends on yourself. You must try to please him."

"Well, I must do something. What'll he give?"

"I don't know yet. In fact, there's another reading to him just now."

"Then there's no chance for me."

"Listen to me. It's a boy he's picked up in the streets, quite unsuited for the place. He's a cash boy at Gilbert & Mack's. Why, that's where you are," she added, with sudden recollection.

"A cash boy from my own place? What's his name?"

"Fowler, I believe."

"I know him—he's lately come. How did he get in with the old man?"

"Mr. Wharton fell in the street, and he happened to be near and helped him home. So he was invited to dinner, and I have just learned that he is engaged to read every evening."

"Then where's the chance for me?"

"You ought to be able to compete with a mere boy."

“I don’t know. You’ll have to manage it, aunt.”

“I’ll see what I can do to-morrow. He ought to prefer my nephew to a strange boy, seeing I have been twenty years in his service. I’ll let you know as soon as I have accomplished anything.”

“I don’t half like the idea of giving up my evenings. I don’t believe I can stand it.”

“It is only for a little while, to get him interested in you.”

“Maybe I might try it a week, and then tell him my health was failing, and get him to do something else for me.”

“At any rate the first thing must be to become acquainted.”

Thomas now withdrew, for he did not enjoy spending an evening with his aunt, the richer by five dollars, half of which was spent before the evening closed at a neighboring billiard saloon.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HOUSEKEEPER SCHEMING.



IF MRS. BRADLEY had been wiser she would have felt less confident of her nephew's producing a favorable impression upon Mr. Wharton. But she didn't look upon him with the eyes of the world, and fancied him far more attractive than he was. She would not mind having her place as reader taken provided it were taken by Thomas. So she resolved to open the subject at the breakfast table.

Mr. Wharton expected to find her still under the influence of the feeling which she had betrayed the previous evening, and was agreeably surprised to find her more social and agreeable than usual. He did not know that she had a purpose to serve. By and by she introduced the subject she had in mind.

"I didn't know, Mr. Wharton," she commenced, "that you intended to engage a reader."

"Nor did I propose to do so till last evening."

"I think—you'll excuse me for saying so—that you will find that boy too young to suit you."

"I don't think so. He reads very clearly and distinctly."

Mrs. Bradley shrugged her shoulders.

"If I had known you thought of engaging a reader, I would have asked you a favor."

"What favor, Mrs. Bradley? I need not say, of course, that I like to obey you when I can."

"I would have asked you to engage my nephew."

"Indeed, I was not aware that you had a nephew in the city."

"He has not been here long; he came here from Cincinnati."

"Is he a boy?"

"No; he is a young man. He was twenty years old last June. Poor fellow, he finds it hard to get along," and the housekeeper sighed sympathetically.

"Is he unfavorably situated?"

"He has a place as salesman."

"With what firm?"

"Gilbert & Mack."

"Why, that is the same firm that employs my young friend."

"Indeed!"

"It is a good firm."

"Perhaps it is, but my poor nephew receives a very small salary. He finds it very hard to get along."

"What is his salary?"

"I don't exactly know," the housekeeper said in hesitation, for it was her own private opinion that her nephew ought to live on it, and she thought it possible Mr. Wharton might think the same. "It is small, however."

"Your nephew is young. He will be promoted if he serves his employers well."

"Thomas would have been glad to read to you in the

evening, sir," said Mrs. Bradley, commencing the attack. "He is older than the boy you have engaged, and I think would suit you better."

"But for my present engagement, I might have taken him," said Mr. Wharton politely.

"Have you engaged that boy for any length of time?"

"No; but it is understood that he will stay while I need him and he continues to suit me. I have a favorable opinion of him."

Mrs. Bradley coughed in mute protest.

"Besides," continued Mr. Wharton, "he needs the pay. He receives but three dollars a week as a cash boy, and has a sister to support as well as himself."

"I am sorry," she said, in an injured tone. "I hope you'll excuse my mentioning it, but I took the liberty, having been for twenty years in your employ."

"To be sure! You were quite right," said her employer kindly. "Perhaps I may be able to do something for your nephew, though not that. Tell him to come and see me some time."

"Thank you, sir," said the housekeeper, with an air of forced resignation.

She was glad, however, to have obtained so much. She would introduce her nephew, hoping he would favorably impress a man who might, if he pleased, be of essential service to him.

There was one question she wanted to determine, and that was the amount of compensation received by Frank. She did not like to inquire directly from Mr. Wharton, but resolved to gain the information from our hero.

Some evenings later she had an opportunity. Mr. Wharton had an engagement, and asked her to tell Frank, when he arrived, that he was released from duty. Instead of this she received him in the library herself.

"Probably Mr. Wharton will not be home this evening," she said. "If he does not return in half an hour, you need not wait."

She took up her work, seated in Mr. Wharton's usual place, and Frank remained ready for duty.

"Mr. Wharton tells me you have a sister," she said.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Who is dependent upon you for support?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You must find it hard work to provide for her as well as yourself."

"I do, or rather I did till I came here."

"How much does Mr. Wharton pay you?" she asked, in an indifferent tone.

"Five dollars a week," answered Frank, having no excuse for declining to answer.

This was twice as much as Mrs. Bradley anticipated and it did not please her.

"Why couldn't he have paid me that extra when I used to read to him?" she thought. "You are lucky to get such a chance," she said.

"Yes, ma'am; it is more than I earn, I know, but it is a great help to me."

"And how much do you get as cash boy? I believe you are a cash boy."

"Three dollars a week."

“So that you actually receive nearly twice as much for a couple of hours in the evening as for the whole day.”

She spoke as if Frank were quite wrong to receive it, and he colored and felt unpleasant, but he only answered:

“Yes, ma’am.”

“What a pity Thomas can’t have this chance?” she thought.

She remained silent till Frank felt uncomfortable.

“Shan’t I read to you, Mrs. Bradley, till Mr. Wharton comes?” he asked.

“No—or yes, if you like,” she answered, desirous of hearing how well he could read.

Frank read clearly and distinctly, as she could not but acknowledge to herself, much as she was prejudiced against him, and it even crossed her mind that possibly her nephew would not have acquitted himself so well, but this only made her the more prejudiced against our hero, and the more desirous of ousting him.

When it was nine o’clock, she said:

“You need not wait any longer. Mr. Wharton will not be home in time to hear you read.”

“Good evening, Mrs. Bradley,” said Frank.

“Good evening!” she responded coldly.

“That boy is in the way,” she said to herself, when she was left alone. “He is in my way, and Tom’s way. I can see that he is artfully intriguing for Mr. Wharton’s favor, but I must checkmate him. It’s odd,” she resumed, after a pause, “but there is something in his face and voice that seems familiar to me. What is it?”

CHAPTER XV.

AN UNSATISFACTORY INTERVIEW.



“HOW DO, aunt?” said Thomas Bradley carelessly, as he entered the housekeeper’s room.

“Very well, thank you, Thomas. I am glad you are here. I have been wanting to see you.”

“The old man isn’t going to do anything for me, is he?”

“How can you expect it so soon? He doesn’t know you yet. How much do you think he pays the cash boy that reads to him in the evening?”

“I don’t know.”

“Five dollars a week.”

Thomas shrugged his shoulders.

“He won’t make his fortune.”

“It seems to me it is a very handsome sum,” said the housekeeper. “If you had it, it would raise your salary to seventeen dollars a week.”

Again Thomas shrugged his shoulders. He was in debt nearly a hundred dollars to a Broadway tailor, and five dollars a week did not seem very large.

“I wouldn’t give up my evenings for that,” he said.

“It isn’t so much the pay, Thomas, though that would be a help. He might take a fancy to you.”

“That might pay better. When are you going to introduce me?”

"This evening; that is, I will ask Mr. Wharton if he will see you."

"I shan't know what to say to him. However, go ahead."

Mrs. Bradley entered the library, where Frank was engaged in reading aloud.

"Excuse my interruption," she said, "but my nephew has just called, and I should like to introduce him to you, if you will kindly receive him."

"Certainly, Mrs. Bradley," said Mr. Wharton. "Bring him in."

The housekeeper left the room, but speedily re-appeared, followed by her nephew, who seemed a little abashed.

"My nephew, Thomas Bradley, Mr. Wharton," said his aunt by way of introduction. "You have often heard me speak of Mr. Wharton, Thomas."

"How do you do, sir?" said Thomas awkwardly.

"Pray take a seat, Mr. Bradley. Your aunt has been long a member of my family. I am glad to see a nephew of hers. I believe you are a salesman at Gilbert & Mack's?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you must know my young friend here?" pointing to Frank.

"How are you, Cash?" said Thomas laughing, under the impression that he had said something smart.

"Very well, Mr. Bradley," answered Frank quietly.

"You see, that's all the name we call 'em in the store," said Thomas. "There was a good joke the other

day. Old lady from the country came in, and after a while she said to me:

“ ‘How many children that Mrs. Cash must have, and all about of a size.’ Haw! haw!”

Mr. Wharton smiled, but could not help thinking:

“ How poorly this young man compares with my young friend. Still, as he is Mrs. Bradley’s nephew, I must be polite to him.”

“ Are there many cash boys in your establishment, Mr. Bradley?”

“ About a dozen. Ain’t there, Fowler?”

“ I believe so, Mr. Bradley.”

“ Gilbert & Mack do a good business, I should judge.”

“ Yes, they do; but that doesn’t do us poor salesmen much good. We get just enough to keep soul and body together.”

“ I am sorry to hear it,” said Mr. Wharton, privately thinking it rather bad taste in his visitor to introduce such a topic at so early a stage in their acquaintance.

“ Why, sir,” said Thomas, gaining confidence, “all they pay me is twelve dollars a week. How can they expect a fellow to live on that?”

“ I began my career about your age,” said Mr. Wharton, or perhaps a little younger, and had to live on but six dollars a week.”

Thomas shrugged his shoulders.

“ Didn’t you come near starving?” he asked.

“ On the contrary, I saved a little every week.”

“ I can’t,” said Thomas, a little discomfited. “ Why, it takes half that to dress decently.”

Mr. Wharton glanced quietly at the rather loud and flashy dress worn by his visitor, but only said:

“A small salary, of course, makes economy necessary.”

“But when a fellow knows he earns a good deal more than he gets, he doesn’t feel like starving himself just that his employers may grow rich.”

“Of course, if he can better himself they cannot object.”

“That’s just what I want to do,” said Thomas; “but I expect I need influence to help me to something better. That’s a good hint,” thought he.

“I was telling Thomas,” said the housekeeper, “that you had kindly expressed a desire to be of service to him. Five dollars a week more”—she looked pointedly at Frank as she spoke—“would be a great help to him.”

“I am not now in active business,” said Mr. Wharton, and of course have not the opportunities I formerly had for helping young men, but I will bear your case in mind Mr. Bradley.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Thomas. “I am sure I earn a thousand dollars a year.”

“I think, Thomas,” said Mrs. Bradley, “we won’t intrude on Mr. Wharton longer this evening. When he finds something for you he will tell me.”

“All right, aunt. Good-night, Mr. Wharton. Good-night, Cash,” said Thomas, chuckling anew at the old fake.

“Well, aunt,” said he, when they were once more in the housekeeper’s room, “do you think the old gentleman will do anything for me?”

"I hope so; but I am not sure, Thomas, but that you were not too familiar."

"Why shouldn't I be? Ain't I as good as he is, barring the money?"

"You spoke of money too quick."

"It's my way to come to business. Of course a woman don't understand it; she wants to palaver half an hour first. But Mr. Wharton used to be a man of business, and he will understand me."

"I wish you were his reader, instead of that boy."

"Well, I don't. I wouldn't want to be mewed up in that room with the old man every night. I should get tired to death of it."

"You would have a chance to get him interested in you. That boy is artful; he is doing all he can to win Mr. Wharton's favor. He is the one you have most reason to dread."

"Do you think so, aunt?"

"Yes; I am sure of it."

"Do you think he will do me any harm?"

"I think he will injure your chances."

"Egad! if I thought that, I'd wring the young rascal's neck."

"There's a better way, Thomas."

"What is that?"

"Can't you get him dismissed from Gilbert & Macks?"

"How?"

"I don't know; you can tell better than I."

"I haven't enough influence with the firm."

"Suppose they thought him dishonest?"

"They'd give him the sack, in course."

"Can't you make them think so, Thomas?"

"I don't know."

"Then make it your business to find out."

"I suppose you know what good it's going to do, aunt, but I don't. He's got his place here with the old man."

"If Mr. Wharton hears that he is disgraced, and has lost his situation, he will probably discharge him too."

"That's so; I didn't think of that."

"And then you'll have a clear field."

"Perhaps so. I suppose you know best."

"Do as I tell you, and I will manage the rest."

"All right. I need your help enough. To-night, for instance, I'm regularly cleaned out. Haven't got but twenty-five cents to my name."

"It seems to me, Thomas," said his aunt, with a troubled look, "you are always out of money."

"How can I help it, aunt, with my miserable salary? a fellow can't live respectably on twelve dollars a week."

"I'll give you five dollars, Thomas, but you must remember that I am not made of money. My wages are small."

"You ought to have a good nest-egg laid aside, aunt."

"I've got something, Thomas, and when I die it'll be yours."

"I hope I shan't have to wait too long," thought Thomas, but he did not give utterance to the thought.

"How have you got your money invested, aunt?" he asked.

"It's in two savings banks."

“You can’t get much interest there. I can invest it for you so you’ll make eight per cent.”

“What do you know about investments, Thomas?” asked the housekeeper shrewdly. “You haven’t got any money invested, have you?”

“Not much, but I’m in with a young broker in Wall Street, and he puts me up to a good thing occasionally.”

“The savings banks are good enough for me,” said Mrs. Bradley. “Come again soon, Thomas, and don’t forget what I have said.”

CHAPTER XVI.

JOHN WADE.



TALL MAN, with a sallow complexion and heavily-bearded face, stood on the deck of a Cunard steamer, only a few miles distant from New York harbor.

“It’s three years since I have seen America,” he said to himself thoughtfully. “I suppose I ought to feel a patriotic fervor about setting foot once more on my native shore, but I don’t believe in nonsense. I would be content to live in Europe all my life, if my uncle’s fortune were once in my possession. I am his sole heir, but he persists in holding on to his money-bags, and limits me to a paltry three thousand a year. I must see if I can’t induce him to give me a good round sum on account—fifty thousand at the least—and then I can wait a little more patiently till he drops off.”

He pulled out a cigar as he formed this resolution, and began to pace the deck thoughtfully.

“When shall we reach port, captain?” he asked, as he passed that officer in the course of his promenade.

“In four hours, I think, Mr. Wade.”

“Do you think I can land to-night?”

“We shall get in too late for the Custom House examination to take place this evening, but that won’t prevent your landing.”

“I shan’t give the Custom House people much trouble. If I can land this evening, I shall. I am tired of being rocked in the cradle of the deep.”

“I suppose you will enjoy a good bed on shore better.”

Here the conversation closed. The captain’s duties called him to another part of the vessel, and the passenger with whom he had spoken resumed his walk.

“So this is my birthday,” he said to himself. “Thirty-five years old to-day. Half my life gone, and I am still a dependent on my uncle’s bounty. Suppose he should throw me off—leave me out in the cold—where should I be? With expensive tastes, with no profession, I shudder to think what would become of me. It is lucky there is no one to step between me and the inheritance. If he should find the boy—but no! there is no chance of that. I have taken good care of that. By the way, I must look him up soon—cautiously, of course—and see what has become of him. He will grow up a laborer or mechanic, and die without a knowledge of his birth, while I fill his place and enjoy his inheritance. That is as it should be. Never having been used to luxury, he will never know what he has lost. I wonder how the old man is now. He must be close upon seventy. He can’t last much longer. Patience, patience! By the time I am forty I should possess his estate, and then I can take my proper place in the world.”

At six o’clock the vessel reached the Quarantine. Most of the passengers decided to remain on board one night more, but John Wade was impatient, and leaving his trunks, obtained a small boat and soon touched the shore.

"Shall I go to the Astor House for the night, or go up at once to my uncle's house?" he said to himself.

It did not take long to decide. He was eager to see his uncle, not from any affectionate interest in his welfare, but that he might survey him with the eyes of sordid calculation, and estimate the probable number of years which separated him from his expected inheritance.

There had been some delay in leaving the steamer, as there always is. It was nearly eight when John Wade landed in the city. It was half-past eight when he stood on the steps of his uncle's residence and rang the bell.

That residence is well known to us. It was the house where Frank was at that very moment engaged in reading to Mr. Wharton, for Mr. Wharton was John Wade's uncle.

"Is my uncle—is Mr. Wharton—at home?" he asked of the servant who answered the bell.

"Yes, sir."

"I am his nephew, just arrived from Europe. Let him know that I am here, and would like to see him."

The servant, who had never before seen him, having only been six months in the house, regarded him with some curiosity, and then went to do his bidding.

"My nephew arrived!" exclaimed Mr. Wharton in surprise. "Why, he never let me know he was coming."

"Will you see him, sir?"

"To be sure! Bring him in at once."

"My *dear* uncle!" exclaimed John Wade, with effusion, for he was a politic man, and could act when it suited his interest to do so, "I am *so glad* to see you. How is your health?"

"I am getting older every day, John."

"You don't look a day older, sir," said John, who did not believe what he said, for he could plainly see that his uncle had grown older since he last saw him.

"You think so, John, but I feel it. I can feel the approaches of age and its infirmities. But your coming is a surprise. You did not write that you intended sailing."

"I formed the determination very suddenly, sir."

"Were you tired of Europe?"

"No; but I wanted to see you, sir. Remember we had not met for three years, and that is a long time, considering how near we are to each other."

"And you really took so long a journey for my sake, John?" asked the old gentleman with a smile of pleasure.

"Yes, sir."

"Thank you, John," said his uncle, pressing his nephew's hand. "I am glad you think so much of me. As you say, we are near to each other, and we ought to feel drawn together. Did you have a pleasant voyage?"

"Rather rough, sir."

"You have had no supper, of course. If you will ring the bell, the housekeeper will see that some is got ready for you."

"Is Mrs. Bradley still in your employ, uncle?"

"Yes, John. I am so used to her that I shouldn't know how to get along without her. She has been twenty years in my house."

"I thought it was as long as that. I can remember her from a boy."

"How old are you now, John?"

"Thirty-five, uncle. I too am growing old."

"I didn't think you were as old, John. Not that it seems old to me. When you are seventy you will look upon that as young."

Hitherto John Wade had been so occupied with his uncle that he had not observed Frank. But at this moment our hero coughed involuntarily and John Wade looked at him. He seemed to be singularly affected. He started perceptibly, and his sallow face blanched, as his eager eyes were fixed upon the boy's face.

"Good heavens!" he muttered to himself. "*Who is that boy? How came he here?*"

Frank noticed his intent gaze, and wondered at it, but Mr. Wharton's eyesight was defective, and he did not perceive his nephew's excitement.

"I see you have a young visitor, uncle," said John Wade, burning with anxious curiosity, and determined at once to satisfy it.

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Wharton with a kindly smile. "He is a very constant visitor, eh, Frank?"

"Yes, sir," said our hero, smiling in turn.

"He spends all his evenings with me," said Mr. Wharton.

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded John Wade, with sudden suspicion and fear. "He seems very young company for——"

"For a man of my years," said Mr. Wharton, finishing the sentence. "You are right, John. But, you see, my eyes are weak, and I cannot use them for reading

in the evening. So it occurred to me to engage a reader. Otherwise the time would have hung heavily on my hands."

"Very true," said his nephew, who had by this time recovered his self-possession. He was not sure whether his temporary excitement had been noticed by his uncle, and though he wished to inquire the name of the boy whose appearance had so powerfully impressed him, he determined not to do it at present. What information he sought he preferred to obtain from the housekeeper, whom he should see in a few moments. He turned away from Frank, therefore, with ostentatious indifference, and began to speak with his uncle on other topics.

Meanwhile Frank's attention had been drawn to the visitor. It was natural, since, as he gathered, he was a nephew of his employer. But the interest was deepened when he saw how John Wade was affected by the sight of him.

"He seemed surprised, as if he had seen me somewhere before, and recognized me," thought Frank, "but I don't remember him. If I had seen his face before I think I should remember it."

Not that the face pleased him. There are some persons whom we instinctively dislike or fear, though we cannot explain why. So it was in the present case. Though John Wade was the nephew of a man whom he had every reason to like, Frank could not disguise from himself that he did not like him. Nay more, he felt a vague and inexplicable dislike, and an undefined presentiment that this man whom he now saw, as he thought for the first time, would some time work him harm.

CHAPTER XVII.

TWO CONSPIRATORS.



“DON’T COME out, uncle,” said John Wade, when summoned to tea by the housekeeper. “Mrs. Bradley and I are going to have a chat by ourselves, and I will soon return.”

“Very well, John. Then I will hear a little more reading while you are at tea.”

“By all means, uncle. I place myself in your charge, Mrs. Bradley.”

John Wade’s object in dispensing with his uncle’s presence will readily be understood. He wished to ask questions which could not have been asked before Mr. Wharton.

“You are looking thin, Mr. John,” said Mrs. Bradley.

“Am I thinner than usual? I never was very corpulent, you know. How is my uncle’s health? He says he is well.”

“He is pretty well, but he isn’t as young as he was.”

“Do you see any evidences of declining strength?” asked the nephew with interest.

“What do you think yourself, Mr. John? You have not seen him for three years.”

“I think he looks older,” said he slowly.

“Yes, I can see it myself.”

“But that is not surprising—at his age. He is seventy, isn’t he?”

“Not quite. He is sixty-nine.”

“His father died at seventy-one.”

“Yes.”

“But that is no reason why my uncle should not live till eighty. I hope he will.”

“We all hope so,” said the housekeeper; but she knew, while she spoke, that if, as she supposed, Mr. Wharton’s will contained a generous legacy for her, his death would not afflict her much. She suspected also that John Wade was waiting impatiently for his uncle’s death, that he might enter upon his inheritance. Still their little social fictions must be kept up, and so both expressed a desire for his continued life, though neither was deceived as to the other’s real feeling on the subject.

“By the way, Mrs. Bradley,” said John Wade, leading the way to the subject in which he was interested, “how came my uncle to engage that boy to read to him? It’s rather an odd freak, isn’t it?”

“He was led into it,” said the housekeeper with emphasis.

“How do you mean? Who led him?”

“The boy himself. He’s an artful and designing fellow, you may rely upon it.”

“She doesn’t like him. Good!” secretly commented John Wade.

“What’s his name?” he asked.

“Frank Fowler.”

“Fowler!” repeated her companion, suddenly setting

down the cup which he was lifting to his lips. "Is his name Fowler?" he repeated, with a startled expression.

"Yes, sir," answered the housekeeper, rather surprised at his manner. "You don't know anything about him, do you?"

"Oh, no," said John Wade, recovering his composure. "He is a perfect stranger to me; but I once knew a man of that name, and a precious rascal he was. When you mentioned the name I thought he might be a son of this man."

"Very likely," said Mrs. Bradley, quite ready to believe anything ill of Frank's father.

"Does he say his father is alive?"

"No, he is dead, and his mother too, so the boy says."

"You haven't told me how my uncle fell in with him."

"It was an accident. Your uncle fell in getting out of a Broadway stage, and this boy happened to be near, and seeing that Mr. Wharton was a rich gentleman he helped him home, and was invited in. Then he told him some story about his poverty, and so worked upon your uncle's feelings that he hired him to read to him at five dollars a week."

"How long ago was this?"

"Only a few weeks."

"Is this all the boy does?"

"No; he is cash boy in a large store on Broadway. He is employed there all day, and he is here only in the evening."

"Does my uncle seem attached to him?" asked John thoughtfully.

“He’s getting fond of him, I should say. The other day he asked me if I didn’t think it would be a good thing to take him into the house and give him a room. I suppose the boy put it into his head.”

“No doubt. What did you say?”

“I opposed it. I said the boy needed to be at the store early, and we didn’t have breakfast early enough. Besides I told him that a boy would be a great deal of trouble in the family.”

“You did right, Mrs. Bradley. What did my uncle say?”

“He hinted about taking him from the store and letting him go to school. The next thing would be his adopting him. The fact is, Mr. John, the boy is so artful that he knows just how to manage your uncle. No doubt he put the idea into Mr. Wharton’s head, and he may do it yet.”

“Does my uncle give any reason for the fancy he has taken to the boy?” demanded John, desirous of satisfying himself on one subject which gave him anxiety.

“Yes,” said the housekeeper. “He has taken it into his head that the boy resembles your cousin George, who died abroad. You were with him, I believe.”

“Yes, I was with him. My uncle thinks the boy looks like George?” said John Wade, looking very much disturbed.

“Yes, and the worst of it is, *there is* a resemblance. When I first saw the boy I was reminded of some one. I could not tell whom, but when your uncle mentioned it I could see who he looked like.”

"Is the resemblance strong? I took very little notice of him."

"You can look for yourself when you go back."

"What else did my uncle say? Tell me all."

"He said, 'What would I give, Mrs. Bradley, if I had such a grandson? If George's boy had lived he would have been about Frank's age.' And then he sighed and grew thoughtful, Mr. John," continued the housekeeper, leaning over the table and lowering her voice. "I might as well speak plainly. You're my master's heir, or ought to be, but if this artful boy stays here long there's no knowing what your uncle may be influenced to do. If he gets into his dotage he may come to adopt him and leave the property away from you. You won't be offended with me for my plain speaking?"

"Offended, my good friend?" said John Wade. "On the contrary, I thank you heartily. I believe you are quite right. The danger exists, and we must guard against it. I see you don't like the boy."

"No, I don't. He's separated your uncle and me. Before he came I used to spend my evenings in the library and read to your uncle. Now that boy is engaged, and I see very little of him. I am asked into the library, but I don't feel at home there, now that I have nothing to do."

"I see; you have reason to complain."

"Besides, when I found your uncle wanted a reader, I asked him to take my nephew, who is a salesman in the very same store where that boy is a cash boy, but although I've been twenty years in this house, I could

not get him to grant the favor which he granted to that boy, whom he never met till a few weeks ago."

Mrs. Bradley spoke rapidly and bitterly, perceiving that her listener sympathized with her. She wanted to enlist John on her side, knowing that his position already gave him large influence with Mr. Wharton, and that he was likely to be a man of wealth when the uncle died.

"Mrs. Bradley, I sympathize with you," said her companion. "This boy is evidently working against us both. You have been twenty years in my uncle's service. He ought to remember you handsomely in his will."

"He ought, Mr. John. I have worn out the best part of my life in his service."

"If I inherit the property, as is my right, your services shall be remembered," said John Wade emphatically.

"Thank you, Mr. John," said the gratified housekeeper. It was a great deal, she thought, to be in with the future heir.

"That secures her help," thought John in his turn. "She will now work hard for me. When the time comes I can do as much or as little for her as I please."

"Of course, we must work together against this interloper, who appears to have gained a dangerous influence over my uncle."

"You can depend upon me, Mr. John," said Mrs. Bradley.

"I am sure of it. Now, is there any way that has occurred to you by which that influence can be lessened?"

“I thought—you know my nephew works in the same store with him—if he could manage to make Gilbert & Mack think him dishonest, that would lose him his situation, and your uncle would be turned against him.”

“It won’t do, Mrs. Bradley,” said John Wade, shaking his head. “My uncle would take his part. Leave it to me. I will think it over and tell you my plan. But my uncle will wonder at my appetite. I must go back to the library. We will speak of this subject again.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

A FAISE FRIEND.



HEN John Wade re-entered the library Frank was reading, but Mr. Wharton stopped him.

"That will do, Frank," he said. "As I have not seen my nephew for a long time, I shall not require you to read any longer. You can go, if you like."

Frank bowed, and bidding the two good-evening, left the room.

"That is an excellent boy, John," said the old gentleman, as the door closed upon our hero.

"How did you fall in with him?" asked John, not for information, but to draw out his uncle and ascertain what he had to fear. Mr. Wharton told the story with which the reader is already familiar.

"You don't know anything of his antecedents, I suppose?" said John carelessly.

"Only what he told me. His father and mother are dead, and he is obliged to support himself and his sister."

"I suppose his story is to be relied upon."

"Surely you don't doubt it!" said Mr. Wharton almost indignantly.

"Pardon me, uncle. I may be naturally suspicious, but I have seen a great deal of knavery in the world."

"I never should suspect Frank," said his uncle emphatically. "He is an excellent boy."

"I dare say he is," said John, with apparent indifference. "Do you object to a cigar?"

"Not at all. I don't smoke myself, but I don't mind others smoking."

"Thank you, uncle. Then I'll light a cigar."

"Did you notice anything familiar in Frank's expression?" asked Mr. Wharton, to whom the subject seemed interesting.

"Now for it!" thought John.

"I don't know. I didn't observe him very closely."

"He looks very much as poor George did at his age."

"I don't know but he does—a little," assented John Wade from motives of policy, "but then boys of that age are very apt to look alike."

"I don't know about that, but whenever I look at Frank I think of George. If George's boy had lived I think he would have looked like Frank."

"Perhaps so."

"I suppose that is why I have felt more closely drawn to the boy. I proposed to Mrs. Bradley that the boy should have a room here, but she did not favor it. I think she is prejudiced against him."

"Probably she is afraid he would be some trouble. It is lucky I am not that boy or she might object to me," said John Wade laughing.

"If George's boy had lived, he would be about Frank's age. It would have been a great comfort to me to superintend his education and watch him grow up. I could

not have wished him to be more gentlemanly or promising than my young reader."

"Decidedly that boy is in my way," said John Wade to himself. "I must manage to get rid of him, and that speedily, or my infatuated uncle will be adopting him."

"Of what disease did George's boy die, John?" asked Mr. Wharton.

"A sudden fever."

"And you stayed with him till the last?"

"Yes. I watched by his sick-bed, uncle, for your sake and his."

"I was at Havana at the time."

"Yes."

"I wish I could have seen him before he died."

"I hoped he would live long enough for that, uncle, but the poor boy's strength was soon exhausted. I think his constitution was delicate."

"And I returned only to find both son and grandson gone. I had only the sad satisfaction of seeing his grave."

"Yes, he was buried in the family lot at Greenwood five days before you reached home."

"When I see men of my own age surrounded by children and grandchildren it makes me almost envious," said Mr. Wharton sadly. "I always liked young life. It made me feel young again. I declare to you, John, since that boy has been with me, I have felt happier and more cheerful than for years."

"It is lucky I came home as I did," thought John Wade. "My interests imperatively required it."

"You have been too much alone, uncle," he said. "No wonder you were lonely. I blame myself for remaining away so long. While I was selfishly enjoying myself in Europe you were living solitary here."

"Don't blame yourself, John," said his uncle kindly. "You are young, and it was only natural that you should forget how I felt. When I was at your age I was immersed in business, and had no time to be lonely."

"At any rate, uncle, I will try now to relieve your loneliness somewhat. I shall settle down for a while in New York."

"I am glad to hear it, John. Between you and my young friend Frank, I shall not be in danger of *ennui*."

"That boy again!" muttered John to himself. "I begin to hate the young cub, but I mustn't show it. My first work must be to separate him from my uncle. That will require consideration. I wonder whether the boy knows that he is not Fowler's son. I must find out. If he does, and should happen to mention it in my uncle's presence, it might awaken suspicions in his mind. I must interview the boy and find out what I can. To enlist his confidence I must assume a friendly manner."

In furtherance of this determination John Wade greeted our hero very cordially the next evening when they met, a little to Frank's surprise.

"My uncle tells me you have relieved his solitude," he said. "I am very glad to see him taking an interest in young society. You read very well."

"Thank you, sir."

"There is nothing the matter with my eyes, but I am

lazy enough to prefer being read to this evening rather than to read, so with your permission, uncle, I will remain here during the reading."

"Certainly, John," said Mr. Wharton with a pleased smile. "It will be more social."

When the reading terminated, John Wade said carelessly:

"I believe, uncle, I will go out for a walk. I think I shall be better for it. In what direction are you going, Frank?"

"Down Sixth Avenue, sir."

"Very good; I will walk along with you. It will be pleasanter than walking alone; that is, unless you are going to ride."

"No, sir; I generally walk."

"All right then. Shall you be up, uncle, when I return?"

"Very likely, John."

"Don't sit up for me. When I go out I never know how long I stay."

"Consult your own pleasure, John. I shall go to bed in an hour, and you may wish to be out longer."

"Good-night, then."

"Good-night."

Frank and his companion descended the front steps and walked toward Sixth Avenue.

"My uncle tells me you have a sister to support," said John Wade, opening the conversation.

"Yes, sir."

"Younger than yourself?"

"Yes, sir. She is two years younger."

"Is she in the city?"

"No, sir; she is in the country town where my mother died. I think she is better off there than in the city. She is boarding with some friends of mine."

"No doubt you are right. You are too young to have the charge of a young sister in a city like this, even if you had the time."

"Very true, sir. Grace would be left alone a good deal of the time, as I am all day in a store, and in the evening I read to Mr. Wharton."

"Does your sister resemble you?" asked John Wade. It was a question with a purpose.

"No, sir, but that is not surprising, for——"

Our hero stopped short. He was just about to reveal the secret which he had learned from Mrs. Fowler on her death-bed. He checked himself, but his companion quickly asked:

"Why is it not surprising?"

Frank hesitated.

"You were about to assign some reason."

"It is a secret," said our hero slowly; "that is, it has been a secret, but I don't know why I should conceal it. Grace is not my sister."

"Not your sister!" repeated John Wade quickly. "Who is she, then?"

"She is Mrs. Fowler's daughter, but I am not her son. I will tell you the story."

That story, which Frank told as briefly as possible, need not be repeated. John Wade listened to it with

secret alarm. The boy knew then that there was a mystery attending his parentage. Suppose Mr. Wharton should learn this, and connect it with Frank's strong resemblance to his dead son! The mere supposition filled him with dismay.

"It is a strange story," he said. "You are quite sure Mrs. Fowler was not wandering in mind?"

"I am perfectly sure of it," said Frank almost indignantly.

"Do you not feel a strong desire to learn your true parentage?"

"Yes, sir. I think I shall learn some day."

"What makes you think so?"

"I don't know, but I feel as if I should some day meet the man who gave me into Mrs. Fowler's charge."

"*You have met him, but it is lucky you don't suspect it,*" thought John Wade.

"I am glad you told me this story," said he aloud. "It is quite romantic. I may be able to help you in your search. But let me advise you to tell no one else at present. No doubt there are parties interested in keeping the secret of your birth from you. You must move cautiously, and your chance of solving the mystery will be improved."

"Thank you, sir. I will follow your advice."

"I was mistaken in him," thought Frank. "I disliked him at first, but he seems inclined to be my friend."

"I must act, and at once," thought John Wade in his turn. "That boy knows too much. He is dangerous."

CHAPTER XIX.

LEFT ALONE.



WHEN FRANK reached his lodging he found Jasper waiting up for him. He looked thoughtful, so much so that Frank noticed it.

"Has anything happened, Jasper?" he asked.

"What makes you ask?"

"You look as if you had something on your mind."

"You have guessed right. I have."

"Is it a secret?"

"O, no; I intended to tell you. Read that letter."

He drew from his pocket a letter, which Frank took from his hands.

"It is from an uncle of mine in Ohio, who is proprietor of a weekly newspaper. He is getting old, and finds the work too much for him. He offers me a thousand dollars a year if I will come out and relieve him."

"That's a good offer, Jasper."

"So it is. It's considerably more than I get here, and it will be less expensive living there also."

"I suppose you will accept?"

"It is for my interest to do so. Probably my uncle will after a while surrender the whole establishment to me. But there are two things that make me hesitate."

“What are they, Jasper?”

“I don’t like to leave New York, and I don’t like to leave you.”

“I shall be sorry to part with you, Jasper. It will seem very lonely, but I think you ought to go. It is a good chance, and if you refuse it you may not get such another.”

“Very true, Frank. That’s just what I have been saying to myself. But I couldn’t make up my mind.”

“You had better accept.”

“Then I will, on one condition. You will write to me sometimes?”

“With pleasure, Jasper. Perhaps you would like to engage me as New York correspondent of your paper?”

“A good idea, Frank. Will you accept?”

Frank shook his head.

“I am not qualified,” he said. “Wait a few years, and I may like to try it. When must you go?”

“My uncle wants me to come on at once. I think I will start Monday.”

“Then I shall have to find a new room.”

“Why?”

“I can’t pay three dollars a week.”

“Mrs. Blake says you may have it for a dollar and a half till you can find a room-mate. I asked her, thinking it possible I might go. I wanted to consult you first.”

“How much I shall miss you, Jasper?”

“I hope you will. But you have found good friends now, and you won’t need me so much.”

"Yes, I am doing pretty well now, but at first it looked doubtful if I could make my way."

"A boy like you is sure to make his way. You have a stout heart, and are willing to work faithfully. That's the secret."

"I hope I shall succeed," said Frank thoughtfully. "Everything looks bright at present, but somehow, Jasper, I can't explain why, I have a presentiment that something is going to happen."

"Something happens every day."

"I mean some ill luck."

"Don't encourage such a thought, Frank. It'll be time enough to trouble yourself about ill luck when it comes."

"You are right, Jasper, and I will follow your advice."

Jasper saw no reason to change his determination, and on Monday morning, having settled up his affairs in the city, he started on his journey to Ohio. Frank was unable to accompany him to the depot, as he desired, on account of the necessity of being at the store. When he had said good-by to his room-mate, and realized that he must come home to an empty room, he could not help feeling lonely. But his spirit was hopeful and elastic, and he looked forward to the early letter which his friend had promised to write.

Thus at a critical point in his fortunes, when two persons were planning to injure him, he lost the presence and help of a valued friend.

Hitherto Frank had met no one from his country home

since his arrival in the city, but on the same day that Jasper left him, while in the store his attention was drawn to a familiar face. Tom Pinkerton, elaborately dressed, entered the store with a strut of self-complacency, and the general air of one who felt himself to be of some consequence.

“Look at that country swell,” said another cash boy to Frank.

Turning in the direction indicated, Frank recognized Tom. Forgetting for the moment that Tom and he were not on cordial terms, and glad to see a familiar face, Frank darted forward and held out his hand.

“Why, Tom Pinkerton, when did you come to town?” he asked.

Tom was rather surprised, so much so that he came near taking the outstretched hand, but remembering in time his superior social position, he said, condescendingly:

“Is that you, Fowler?”

“Yes; how are all the folks at home?”

“What particular folks do you refer to?” asked Tom.

“How are all the fellows? How’s the base-ball club? Have you seen my sister Grace lately?”

“I haven’t had the honor,” said Tom superciliously; “as to the club, I’ve left it.”

“Why did you leave?” asked Frank in surprise. “You were the one that proposed getting it up.”

“I know it, but I didn’t like the way they managed it, so I left.”

The true reason of Tom’s leaving the club was that he

had fully expected to be elected captain on Frank's departure from the town, but in this expectation he had been disappointed. This was too much for Tom to stand, and he indignantly tendered his resignation in consequence, under the vague impression that the club couldn't get along without him, and would be compelled to beg him to return. To his great disgust it continued to prosper, and had not only not made any overtures to him, but had seemed quite contented to leave him out in the cold. It was Tom's decided opinion that republics were ungrateful.

"What do you do in this store?" asked Tom in turn.

"I am a cash boy."

"What do you have to do?"

"When an article has been sold, I take the money to the desk and bring back the right change."

"It isn't much of a position," said Tom contemptuously.

"That is true. I hope to get something better by-and-by."

"How much pay do you get?"

Frank was of opinion that this was none of Tom's business. It would be hardly polite to say so, however, and he refrained, answering with some hesitation:

"Three dollars a week."

"Only three dollars a week!" repeated Tom scornfully.

"That is all."

"I should think you would starve on that."

"That isn't all I earn."

"Why isn't it?"

“ I work in the evening.”

“ Where? In the store?”

“ No; I read aloud to a rich gentleman whose eyes are weak.”

“ What does he pay you?”

Frank was more ready to answer this question, as he liked to have Tom understand that he was doing pretty well after all.

“ He pays me five dollars a week,” he answered.

“ What ! more than you get here?” asked Tom in surprise.

“ Yes.”

Tom was disappointed to hear this. He would prefer to have found his rival, as he considered him, struggling hard for a living. Our hero saw the state of his feelings, and this led him to say significantly:

“ That’s better than going to the poor-house, isn’t it?”

“ You may have to go there yet,” said Tom ungraciously.

“ Not while I have health and strength. Of course it is possible that any one may have to go there.”

“ Any one in *your* position.”

“ Or in *yours*,” said Frank, somewhat provoked by the other’s want of manners.

“ What do you mean by that?” asked Tom quickly.

“ What do you mean by mentioning me and the poor-house together? Do you mean to insult me?”

“ I never insult any one,” said Frank. “ But your father is liable to lose his property, I suppose.”

“ When he does I’ll let you know,” said Tom loftily.

"I expect to come to New York myself soon, to go into business. But I wouldn't be a cash boy; it's a low position."

"I'm sorry you think so," said Frank quietly. "Of course *you* can do better. Perhaps you'll begin by being president of a bank."

Tom was about to make an indignant reply, when the nearest salesman tapped the counter and called out "Cash," a summons which our hero felt obliged to obey. But for its being in the slack time of the day he would not have had an opportunity of talking with Tom so long.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY.



UNCLE," said John Wade, "you spoke of inviting Frank Fowler to occupy a room in the house. Why don't you do it? It would be more convenient to you, and a very good chance for him."

"I should like it," said Mr. Wharton, "but Mrs. Bradley did not seem to regard it favorably when I suggested it."

"Oh, Mrs. Bradley is unused to boys, and she is afraid he would give her trouble. I'll undertake to bring her round."

"I wish you would, John. I don't think Frank would give any trouble, and it would enliven the house to have a boy here. Besides, he reminds me of George, as I told you the other day."

"I am not likely to forget that," said John Wade to himself, "I can assure you."

"I agree with you, uncle," he said aloud. "He does remind me *a little* of George. At any rate he seems like a well-conducted boy, and I don't believe he would be any trouble."

Mr. Wharton was pleased with John's apparent desire to please him.

"It does John credit," he said to himself. "He is above feeling any petty jealousy of Frank."

But the guileless old man was far from understanding the depth of his nephew's duplicity. He little understood the motive that actuated him in the proposal to introduce our young hero into the house.

"Well, Mrs. Bradley, what do you think I have done?" asked John, entering the housekeeper's room directly after his interview with his uncle.

"I don't know, Mr. John," she answered, looking up with curiosity.

"I have asked him to give that boy a room in the house."

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed Mrs. Bradley in dismay.

"Yes, I do."

"Are you carried away with him as well as your uncle?"

"Not quite. The fact is I have a motive in what I am doing."

"I can't understand it," said the housekeeper dubiously.

"Then I'll tell you."

He bent over and whispered in her ear.

Her countenance cleared, and the puzzled look was succeeded by one of comprehension.

"What do you think of that?" he asked triumphantly.

"Oh, what a head you've got, Mr. John," she said admiringly. "I never should have thought of that."

"You see our purpose is to convince my uncle that he

is unworthy of his favor. At present that would be rather difficult, but once get him into the house and we shall have no trouble."

"I understand."

"I have agreed to bring you round to favor the plan, as my uncle said you were opposed to it. I will report that I have succeeded."

"Certainly, Mr. John."

"After this boy is out of the way, my uncle may be brought to feel an interest in your nephew. At present he has no thought for any one but Frank Fowler."

In due time John Wade announced to his uncle that the housekeeper had withdrawn her objections to his plan.

"Then I'll tell him to-night," said Mr. Wharton, brightening up.

"I think it would be a good plan. Of course it will be an object for the boy to save his room rent. Besides he will take breakfast and dinner here. That will enable him to save up most of his salary."

"So it will, John. How thoughtful you are."

"And what an innocent, unsuspecting old simpleton you are!" thought his irreverent nephew, "to suppose me carried away by this artful boy to the same extent as yourself."

"I am glad, Mrs. Bradley, that you don't object to Frank's having a room here," said Mr. Wharton kindly, when he met the housekeeper.

"Don't mention it, sir. As soon as Mr. John mentioned that it would be agreeable to you I was quite in favor of it, sir."

"I don't think he will give you much trouble, Mrs. Bradley."

"I am sure he won't. He seems a very quiet boy."

"Very quiet and gentlemanly. I am getting quite attached to him."

Mrs. Bradley's brows contracted a little, but Mr. Wharton did not observe it. To avoid assenting to his praise of a boy she disliked, she asked:

"In what room shall I put him, Mr. Wharton?"

"I leave that to your judgment, Mrs. Bradley. Of course I want him to be comfortable."

"Certainly, sir; you can rely upon me. I will put him in the small back room on the third floor. It is a very nice room."

"I think that will do capitally."

This conversation took place on Monday, the very day that Jasper left the city for his new Western home.

"It will be rather lonely coming home now," thought Frank. "Jasper has always been up when I got back. Now I shall return to an empty room."

Shortly after he entered the library that evening, Mr. Wharton made the proposal. It was something Frank had never dreamed of, but the great advantage of such an arrangement struck him at once. It would add considerably to the value of his weekly income, and enable him even to lay by two or three dollars a week.

"You are very kind, Mr. Wharton," he said. "I never thought of such a thing."

"I hope it will be agreeable to you, Frank."

"It will be very agreeable to me, sir, especially as the

friend that I have been rooming with has just left the city, and will not return, and I should not be sure of getting any one else that I should like."

"Then it is settled that you are to come. You can choose your own time for coming."

"I will come to-morrow, sir."

'Very well,' said Mr. Wharton, with satisfaction.

"I ought to mention," said the old gentleman, "that this arrangement was suggested by my nephew. I had thought of it, to be sure, but nothing would have been done if he had not recommended it to me."

Frank was not a little surprised by this information. John Wade had always been polite to him, but for some reason which he could not define to himself he was not attracted towards his patron's nephew. He had an instinctive sense of repulsion—an instinct which is often a safer guide than reason. Yet this man had been instrumental in conferring a great favor upon him.

"I ought to like him," thought Frank. "I will if I can, for he has shown himself my friend."

But even to himself he acknowledged that it would require an effort.

There was another thing that excited our hero's surprise. The housekeeper had always treated him coolly, and he had a glimpse of the reason. He saw that his favor with Mr. Wharton had excited her jealousy. Yet when she entered the room, and the old gentleman announced our hero's acceptance of the invitation, she smiled and said quite cordially:

"I am glad to hear it. I will try to make him comfortable."

"Thank you, Mrs. Bradley," said Frank.

"How suspicious I have been!" he said, in self-reproach. "I thought she did not like to have me here, and now she seems glad that I am coming to the house. I will try to show her that I am grateful."

John Wade did not enter the library till the reading was nearly over.

"Well," said he pleasantly, "has your young friend accepted the invitation?"

"Yes, John. I told him that it was you that suggested it."

"What made you mention such a trifle, uncle? I thought both you and he would like it. That was my reason."

"I thank you very much, at any rate, Mr. Wade," said Frank.

"It isn't worth mentioning. I may as well say frankly that I was thinking more of my uncle than of you in suggesting it."

"You are always considerate of me, John," said Mr. Wharton gratefully.

"I ought to be, uncle. You are my nearest relative."

"True, John; I shan't forget that."

He said this in a significant tone, which caused John's heart to exult in anticipation over the large inheritance which, considering his uncle's age, would be likely soon to come to him. But he pretended not to notice the special meaning, and only to understand it as an assurance of affection.

"How soon are you coming to us, Frank?" inquired John.

“To-morrow, if I can get ready, Mr. Wade.”

“That is right. The sooner the better. This is a large house, and there is plenty of room. No wonder my uncle feels lonely at times. You will make it more cheerful for him.”

“I will try to.”

Five minutes later John Wade entered the housekeeper's room.

“It's all right, Mrs. Bradley,” he said. “The fish nibbles at the bait.”

“What a clever manager you are, Mr. John!” said Mrs. Bradley admiringly.

John Wade laughed.

“It reminds one of a song the children sing,” he said.

“This is the way it goes:

“‘Will you walk into my parlor?’

Said the spider to the fly;

“‘Tis the prettiest little parlor

That ever you did spy.’”

“You are the spider in this case, Mr. John,” said the housekeeper smiling.

“I will divide that honor with you, Mrs. Bradley,” he answered, bowing.

Then both laughed. It was a laugh that boded mischief to our young hero.

CHAPTER XXI.

SPREADING THE SNARE.



THE NEXT day, by special favor, Frank got off from the store two hours earlier than usual. He bought at a Sixth Avenue basement store a small, second-hand trunk for two dollars, feeling that he ought to possess one now that he was about to have so stylish a boarding-place. Then, as to the expense, he would more than save that amount the first week. He packed his scanty wardrobe into the trunk, which, small as it was, he was unable to fill, and had it carried to Mr. Wharton's house.

He asked to see Mrs. Bradley, and she came to the door.

"I am glad to see you," she said graciously. "You may leave your trunk in the hall, and I will have it carried up by the servants. But if you will follow me, I will show you at once which is to be your room."

"Thank you," said Frank, and he followed the housekeeper up the handsome staircase, which contrasted so strongly with that of the humble boarding-house from which he had come, and even now he found it hard to believe that he, a poor boy, who had so narrowly escaped a country poor-house, was really to make his home in such a stately dwelling.

"This is to be your room," said the housekeeper,

opening the door of a small chamber on the third floor.

“Mr. Wade occupies the next room.”

“Thank you.”

“You will find everything convenient, I hope. If not, let me know.”

“It looks very nice and comfortable,” said Frank, looking about him with satisfaction.

There was a soft carpet on the floor, and a few handsomely-framed engravings on the wall; the furniture was of black walnut, while crimson curtains shaded the window.

“I suppose the little vagabond never saw such a fine chamber before,” said the housekeeper to herself. “He ought to be satisfied. It seems like casting pearls before swine; but there’s one good thing about it—it won’t last long. He had better make much of it while he has the chance.”

She left the room, and five minutes later our hero’s modest trunk was brought up and deposited in the room.

“Thank you,” said Frank politely to the serving-boy who brought it up. “I am sorry to give you so much trouble.”

“No trouble in life,” said the boy, won by his politeness. “Shure it isn’t heavy.”

“No,” said Frank, smiling; “I haven’t got clothes enough to fill a large trunk.”

“Shure he doesn’t put on any airs,” thought the boy. “Mrs. Bradley says he’s only a cash boy that the master’s took a fancy to, but he’s a gintleman, anyhow.”

Thus by a kind word Frank won favor with Pat Fer-

guson, and though his position was but an humble one, even his good will was not to be despised.

Mr. Wharton looked pleased when our young hero presented himself in the dining-room at the dinner hour.

"You are welcome, my young friend," he said cordially. "It will make the house livelier to see a young face. It will make us feel younger, eh, Mrs. Bradley?"

"You are quite right, sir," said the housekeeper, doing all she could to speak in the same tone.

"Where are you going to put Frank?"

"On this side of the table, just opposite Mr. John."

"Very well. That will be your place hereafter, Frank. How was business to-day?"

"Pretty lively, sir."

"And you had a good deal of running round to do?"

"Yes, sir."

"Doesn't it tire you being on your feet all day?"

"It did at first, sir, but I am getting used to it."

"You ought to have a better position than cash boy, Frank."

"It will come in good time, sir, I think. Thanks to your kindness I can afford to wait."

"To be sure; it isn't as if you depended entirely on your wages."

"No, sir."

"What do you hear from your sister?"

"Thank you, sir, she is very well."

"By and by you must take a little trip to your old home and give her a surprise visit."

"I should like that very much, sir," said Frank, his eyes sparkling with pleasure at the mere anticipation.

Here John Wade came in. He glanced significantly at the housekeeper as he saw our hero at the table. Then he went round and shook hands with him.

"I am glad to see you here," he said. "Uncle, that fills out the table."

"Yes, John," said Mr. Wharton with satisfaction.

It is not necessary to detail the conversation that ensued. Nothing was said which led Frank to suspect that his presence gave dissatisfaction to any one present. Both Mrs. Bradley and John Wade were polite and cordial, for both had the ability of disguising their real feelings, and poor Frank had not the slightest suspicion that two out of the three persons who sat with him at the table were dangerous enemies—and all the more dangerous because their real designs were covered by a cloak of affected friendship.

That evening Frank read to Mr. Wharton as usual.

When nine o'clock came he said:

"You won't have quite so far to walk this evening as usual."

"No, sir, only up-stairs."

"You need not read aloud any more, but if you see any books in my library which you would like to read to yourself you may do so. In fact, Frank, you must consider yourself one of the family, and act as freely as if you were at home."

"How kind you are to me, Mr. Wharton," said Frank.

"There isn't much credit in that, my boy," said the

old gentleman. "I am old enough to be your grandfather, and——"

John Wade, who was present, hurriedly interrupted his uncle by asking him some question suggested by the news of the day. He didn't fancy the manner in which Mr. Wharton was speaking, and feared he might be tempted to speak of his lost grandson, and thus possibly elicit Frank's story. Such a confidence would, he felt, be dangerous. His plan succeeded. His uncle's attention was diverted, and he did not again return to his conversation with Frank.

The next morning, after Frank had left the house for his daily task, John Wade entered the housekeeper's room.

"That boy is out of the way now, Mrs. Bradley," he said. "You had better see if you have a key that will unlock his trunk."

"All right, Mr. John. I was thinking so myself."

"It is too early, of course, to carry out the plan we have in view, but we may as well be prepared."

"You are quite right, Mr. John. I will go up at once. Is your uncle in the house?"

"No; he has gone out for his regular morning walk, so we need fear no interruption."

The two conspirators went up-stairs, and together entered Frank's room.

"There is his trunk," said the housekeeper. "It is not very large."

"It is large enough for a boy in his position in life. Now where are your keys?"

Mrs. Bradley brought out a large bunch of keys, and successively tried them, but one after another failed to open it.

"That's awkward," said John Wade. "What's the trouble with the keys?"

"They are all too large, except one, and that one is too small."

"Stay a moment. I have a few keys in my pocket. One may possibly answer."

The housekeeper kneeled down, and made trial of John Wade's keys. The last one was successful. The cover was lifted, and the contents were disclosed. But they were hardly worth examining. Our young hero's wardrobe was very limited, and the small trunk was scarcely more than half-full. However, neither John nor Mrs. Bradley seemed particularly interested in the articles, for after turning them over they locked the trunk once more.

"So far good," said John Wade. "We have found the means of opening the trunk when we please. That is sufficient for the present."

"When do you mean to carry out your plan, Mr. John?"

"Two weeks from this time my uncle is obliged to go to Washington for a few days on business. While he is gone, we will spring the trap, and when he comes back he will find the boy gone in disgrace. We'll make short work of him."

"It's a good plan. It can't fail," said Mrs. Bradley, with satisfaction.

They left the chamber, unaware that there had been a witness to a part of their proceedings. When the housekeeper was trying her own keys, Susan, the housemaid, going up-stairs, caught sight of her through a gap in the partly open door, and also caught a glimpse of John Wade.

“What are they about?” thought she. “What are they doing with Mr. Frank’s trunk?”

But Susan was discreet, and felt that it would not be prudent to be caught in the position of a spy. She crept softly up-stairs, and neither of the two conspirators heard her.

CHAPTER XXII.

SPRINGING THE TRAP.



AM going to give you a few days' vacation, Frank," said Mr. Wharton a fortnight later.

Frank looked up inquiringly.

"I am called to Washington on business. However, you have got to feel at home here now."

"Oh, yes, sir."

"And Mrs. Bradley will see that you are comfortable."

"I am sure of that, sir," said Frank politely, for this conversation took place at the breakfast table, at which the housekeeper was present.

"Let your mind be at ease, Mr. Wharton," she said. "All will go on as usual, but we shall be very glad to see you back, sha'n't we, Mr. John?"

"We shall miss you very much, uncle," said the nephew hypocritically; "but don't let that call you back any sooner. Stay as long as your business requires it."

"I shall be glad to get back, John," said Mr. Wharton, gratified to find that he was likely to be missed. "I don't enjoy living in hotels. I shall enjoy my home all the more for my brief absence."

When Frank returned at night, Mr. Wharton was already gone. John Wade and the housekeeper seated

themselves in the library after dinner, and by their invitation our hero joined them. He found both unusually gracious and social.

"By the way, Frank," said John Wade, "did I ever show you this Russian leather pocket-book?" producing one from his pocket.

"No, sir, I believe not."

"I bought it at Vienna, which is noted for its articles of Russian leather."

"It is very handsome, sir."

"So I think. By the way, you may like to look at my sleeve-buttons. They are of Venetian mosaic. I got them myself at Venice last year."

"They are very elegant, sir. You must have enjoyed visiting so many famous cities."

"Yes; it is very interesting. Would you like to go?"

"Very much, sir, but I have very little hope of it."

"Why?"

"It must cost a great deal of money."

"It is expensive, but you may be able to afford it some time."

"I hope so," but Frank's tone showed that his hope was not a very lively one.

John Wade took up the evening paper, and Frank occupied himself with a book from his patron's library. After a while John threw down the paper yawning, and said that he had an engagement. Nothing else occurred that evening which merits record.

Two days later Frank returned home in his usual spirits. Nothing told him that a great misfortune was

impending over him. He had nothing on his conscience, and no reason to feel disturbed. But at the table he was struck by a singular change in the manner of Mrs. Bradley and John Wade, who, of course, were the only other persons present. They spoke to him only on what it was absolutely necessary, and answered his questions in monosyllables.

Frank looked from one to the other in perplexity. What had happened? Were they displeased with him? This was what he asked himself.

"Have you heard from Mr. Wharton?" he asked, it occurring to him suddenly that some accident might have happened the old gentleman.

"I have," answered John Wade, but he said no more.

"Is he well?"

"Quite well."

After this Frank continued to eat in silence, waiting till they should choose to explain the mystery. That time came soon enough.

"Will you step into the library a moment," said John Wade, as they rose from the table.

"Certainly, sir."

He followed John into the library, and Mrs. Bradley entered also.

"Sit down there."

Frank flushed, for the manner of the other was something like that of a judge pronouncing sentence, but of course he obeyed.

"Frank Fowler," the enemy began, "do you remember my showing you two evenings since a pocket-book of Russia leather?"

"Yes, sir," answered our hero in surprise. "You said you bought it at Vienna."

"Exactly. I also showed you some sleeve-buttons of Venetian mosaic, expensively mounted in gold. Do you remember?"

"Certainly, sir."

"You see he remembers, Mrs. Bradley," said John Wade, turning to the housekeeper.

"I see he does."

"I don't understand what all this is about," said Frank uneasily.

"That pocket-book contained a considerable sum of money," pursued his questioner.

"I didn't know anything about that."

"You probably supposed so."

"Will you tell me what you mean, Mr. Wade?" demanded Frank impatiently. "I have answered your questions, but I can't understand why you ask them."

"Perhaps you may suspect," said Wade sarcastically.

"It looks as if you had lost them and suspected me of taking them."

"He has guessed right the first time—eh, Mrs. Bradley?"

"So it appears."

Frank started to his feet, flushed with indignation, and said boldly:

"You are entirely mistaken, Mr. Wade, I am not a thief. I never stole anything in my life."

"It is very easy to say that," sneered John Wade.

"It *may* be true."

“It is true,” said Frank emphatically. “Why do you suspect me?”

“You and Mrs. Bradley were the only persons present when I showed the articles. I suppose you won’t pretend that *she* stole them?”

“No, sir; though she appears to agree with you that I am a thief. I never thought of accusing her.”

“Mr. Wade,” said the housekeeper, “I feel that it is my duty to insist upon search being made in my room. It lies between this boy and myself, and though I know you don’t suspect me, I would rather you would search.”

“Do you make the same offer?” asked John Wade, turning to Frank.

“Yes, sir,” answered our hero proudly. “I wish you to satisfy yourself that I am not a thief.”

“If I find I am wrong, I am ready to apologize, but I fear the result. This morning I left the pocket-book and sleeve-buttons on the bureau in my room when I came down to breakfast. I went out for a walk without thinking of them. When I returned I went to my room and they were gone.”

“It might have been one of the servants,” suggested Mrs. Bradley.

“It might. If it turns out that my present suspicions are unfounded I shall look for them in that direction.”

“Please examine my room first,” said the housekeeper.

“I prefer to begin with Frank’s room. If, as I suspect, he has taken the articles, there will be no need of looking further.”

"If you will come to my room at once, Mr. Wade, you and Mrs. Bradley, I will hand you the key of my trunk."

He spoke with quiet dignity, as befitted one who felt conscious of his innocence.

The two followed him up-stairs, exulting wickedly in his discomfiture, which they had reason to foresee.

"Of course, I shall be only too glad to believe in your innocence," said John hypocritically. "I should be sorry to find that you have abused my uncle's confidence."

"You need not fear it, sir," said Frank quietly.

He handed his key to his artful enemy, and the latter, bending over, opened his trunk, which contained all our hero's small possessions. There was nothing that looked suspicious at first sight. A small pile of clothes was visible, half-filling the trunk.

"I don't see anything," said John Wade.

"Lift the clothes," suggested the housekeeper.

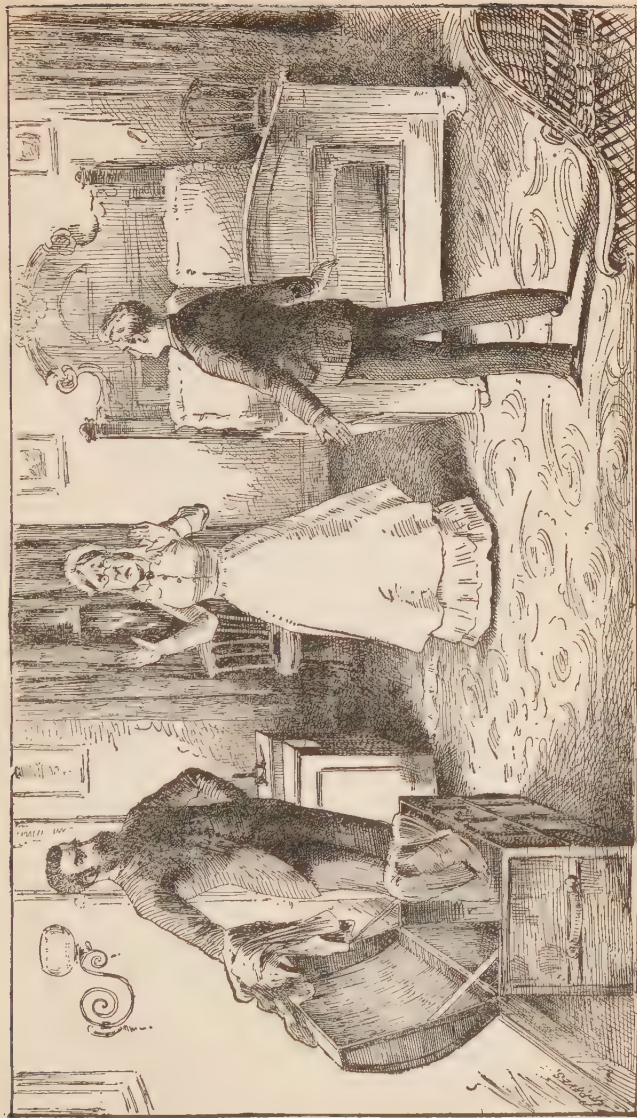
"He raised the pile of clothes, and to Frank's dismay disclosed the missing pocketbook and sleeve-buttons on the bottom of the trunk.

"Look at this, Mrs. Bradley!" he exclaimed in exultation. "What did I tell you?"

"I can't believe in such depravity!" murmured the housekeeper piously.

"What have you got to say for yourself *now*, you young villain?" demanded John Wade in a loud voice.

Poor Frank was overwhelmed with surprise, and it was no wonder that his face flushed.



“WHAT HAVE YOU GOT TO SAY FOR YOURSELF NOW, YOU YOUNG VILLAIN?” DEMANDED JOHN WADE IN A LOUD VOICE.

"I don't understand it," he said in a troubled tone.
"I don't know how the things came there."

"You can't, eh? Well, I can give a pretty good guess."

"I didn't put them there," said Frank more firmly.

"Do you still brazen it out then?"

"No, sir; but I deny having taken them."

"Probably they crept in themselves," sneered John.

"Some one put them there," said Frank, pale but resolute—"some wicked person who wanted to get me into trouble."

"Take care!" said John Wade in a low voice; "take care how you add to your crime by laying it to others. It's a clear case, Mrs. Bradley."

"Yes, sir. However he could repay your poor uncle's kindness so, I can't think."

"I am not guilty—I say it again, Mrs. Bradley," said our hero. "I don't know who it is that wants to injure me, but I don't believe Mr. Wharton will condemn me."

"You shall not have the opportunity of imposing any longer upon my poor uncle. I ought to give you over to the police."

"Don't do that, Mr. John," said the housekeeper, artfully interceding as arranged beforehand.

"Justice demands it, Mrs. Bradley."

"Send him away and he may behave better in future."

"I am afraid it would not be right."

"Your uncle would prefer it, and it would be best to hush the matter up. He deserves punishment, no doubt, but he is young, and this may be his first offense."

"I am not so sure of that," said John Wade, eying Frank maliciously. "I dare say he is an old offender."

"You may say what you please, Mr. Wade," retorted Frank with spirit. "I see you are resolved to be against me, but it doesn't alter the fact. I can't explain how the things came in my trunk."

"Of course not," sneered his enemy.

"But," continued Frank firmly, "there are others probably who can."

"What do you mean by that, you young vagabond?" demanded John Wade suspiciously.

Frank looked at him intently. For the first time he suspected that there was a conspiracy against him, and that John Wade was in it.

"I mean what I say," he asserted. "I am away all day, and nothing is easier than to open my trunk and put articles in, in order to throw suspicion on me."

"Mrs. Bradley," said John Wade, "did you ever hear such outrageous impertinence? Being convicted of stealing, the young rascal insinuates that we are in a plot to disgrace him."

"I never heard of such disgraceful conduct," chimed in the housekeeper.

Frank looked quietly from one to the other, and his suspicion grew stronger. He did not choose to retract.

"Look here, you rascal!" said John Wade roughly. "I shall treat you better than you deserve. I won't give you over to the police out of regard for my uncle, but you must leave this house and never set foot in it again. If I ever see you making the attempt I will give you in

charge. As it is evening you may stay here till morning and breakfast with the servants. When you have found a boarding-place you can send for your trunk. I ought not to be so easy with you, but I will strain a point."

"If I were guilty, or if I thought you really believed me guilty, I would thank you for this indulgence," said Frank. "As it is, I have nothing to say except that I shall not breakfast here, but will pass the night and send for my trunk in the course of the day."

"You understood what I said about not coming here afterward."

"I understood."

"It will be the worse for you if you do."

John Wade and the housekeeper left the room, and our hero was left to realize the misfortune which had overwhelmed him. It was likely to prove serious, as it reduced him to his wages as cash boy.

"Will Mr. Wharton believe that I am a thief?" he asked himself sorrowfully. "I should care more for that than anything else."

CHAPTER XXIII.

TURNED ADRIFT.



RANK rose at an early hour the next morning and left the house. It was necessary for him to find a new home at once in order to be at the store in time. He bought a copy of the *Sun* and turned to the advertising columns. He saw a cheap room advertised near the one he had formerly occupied. Finding his way there he rang the bell.

The door was opened by a slatternly-looking woman, who looked as if she had just got up.

"I see by the *Sun* that you have a room to let," said Frank.

"Yes; do you want to see it now?"

"I should like to."

"It isn't in order. I didn't expect any one so early."

"I had to come early as I have to be at the store in an hour."

"Are you in a store?"

"Yes; I am at Gilbert & Mack's."

"I know the place. It is a large store," said the woman respectfully. "Come up-stairs and I will show you the room."

The room proved to be small, and by no means neat in appearance, but the rent was only a dollar and a

quarter a week, and Frank felt that he could not afford to be particular, so he quickly closed the bargain.

"How soon do you wish to come?" asked his new landlady.

"To-night."

"Can you pay something in advance, to secure the room?"

"I will pay a week's rent in advance," and Frank placed in her hands the sum agreed upon.

"The room shall be ready for you," she said, with satisfaction, "whenever you choose to come."

"My trunk will probably be here in the course of the day," said Frank. "Will you have it put in the room?"

"Certainly."

He next went to an express office, and left an order to have his trunk called for, and then got some breakfast at a restaurant. It was very different from the luxurious meal to which he had of late been accustomed, and his heart sank within him when he reflected how much he had lost, and how different now was his situation.

"I wish I had never gone there," he thought. "I should have been happier."

But what troubled him most was, that his reputation was at the mercy of his unscrupulous enemy, as he was forced to regard John Wade. He could guess in what way he would be misrepresented to his kind patron, Mr. Wharton. It was hard that he was cut off from defending himself. He determined to write a letter to Mr. Wharton, and state the case as well as he could, denying utterly the truth of the charge which had been made against him.

“He is so kind,” he thought; “he cannot wholly refuse to hear me.”

This resolution being formed, he felt better, and turned his attention to his present duties. His place still remained, and he had some income. In this respect he was better off than thousands in the great city, who were out of work, and unable to earn anything.

Frank presented himself at the store at the usual time. Though disturbed in mind, he discharged his duties with his customary fidelity. It was all the more necessary, now that he was deprived of other resources, that he should give satisfaction to Gilbert & Mack.

Nothing of an unusual character occurred, and in the evening he repaired to his new boarding-place. The room had been cleaned up a little, but it still looked dirty, and formed a very unfavorable contrast with the luxurious room which he had occupied at Mr. Wharton's.

Frank sighed, and could not keep back a feeling of despondency. He felt lonely too. In the whole great city there was not one man or woman whom he could call friend. At Mr. Wharton's he had no such feeling. Mr. Wharton, he knew, liked him, and he had been treated cordially by John Wade and the housekeeper, though he now suspected that this cordiality was not real, but only assumed as a cloak to conceal their enmity. There was not one to whom he could speak of the injustice and wrong from which he was at present suffering. There was no one to sympathize with him, and in such circumstances the heart craves sympathy.

“I wish Jasper was here,” he thought. “It would seem very different to me then.”

But Jasper was a thousand miles away, and there was no one to take his place. He was undoubtedly doing better than when in the city, and of this Frank was glad; but nevertheless he missed him.

His trunk had already arrived, so there was nothing left to connect him with the home where for a brief time he had lived so happily. He was turned adrift, and must struggle hard to keep his head above water. Even in this humble way, it would cost all his salary to support himself, and how was he to pay his sister's board? As he was situated at Mr. Wharton's there was no difficulty about it. He could not only pay that and his own expenses, but save money besides. Indeed, he had saved about twenty dollars, but a part of this was due for her board bill. It was evident that he must find something else to do in order to increase his income.

"I can't expect to find another Mr. Wharton," he reflected despondently. "There are not many who would pay me so well for a couple of hours' service in the evening. I must make up my mind to something much less profitable. Some time God will make my innocence clear, and I shall be repaid for this suffering. He will take care of me."

Mrs. Fowler was an humble Christian, and she had taught Frank to look up to Heaven for help and guidance. As her lessons of trust came back to him he felt strengthened and encouraged, and the future didn't seem to him quite so dark.

But his troubles were not yet over.

The next day, about eleven o'clock in the forenoon,

he was surprised at seeing Mrs. Bradley enter the store and thread her way to that part of the counter where her nephew was stationed. She darted one quick look at him, but gave him no sign of recognition. His heart sunk within him, for he had a presentiment that her visit boded fresh evil to him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FROM BAD TO WORSE.



RANK'S misgivings were not without good cause. The housekeeper's call at the store was connected with him. How, will be understood from a conversation which took place that morning between her and John Wade.

"It's a relief to get that boy out of the house, Mrs. Bradley," he said at the breakfast table.

"That it is, Mr. John," she replied. "But he'll be trying to get back, take my word for it."

"He won't dare to," said John Wade incredulously. "I told him if he came near the house I would give him up to the police."

"I am afraid he will write to your uncle. He's bold enough for anything."

"I didn't think of that," said John thoughtfully. "Do you know his handwriting, Mrs. Bradley?"

"I think I should know it."

"Then if any letters come which you know to be from him, keep them back from my uncle."

"What shall I do with them?"

"Give them to me. I don't want my uncle worried by his appeals."

"Your uncle seems to be very much attached to him. He may go to the store to see him."

"That is true. I should not like that. How shall we prevent it, that's the question?"

"If Gilbert & Mack knew that he was not honest they would discharge him."

"Exactly," said John Wade; "and as probably he would be unable to get another situation, he would be compelled to leave the city, and we should get rid of him. I commend your shrewdness, Mrs. Bradley. Your plan is most excellent."

John Wade had more reasons than the housekeeper knew of for desiring the removal of our young hero from the city—reasons which the reader has probably guessed. There was a dark secret in his life connected with a wrong done in years past, from which he hoped some day to reap personal benefit. Unconsciously Frank Fowler stood in his way and must be removed. Such was his determination.

"I am going out this morning," said the housekeeper. "I will make it in my way to call at Gilbert & Mack's. My nephew is a salesman there, as I have told you. I will drop a word in his ear, and that will be enough to settle that boy's hash."

"Your language is professional, Mrs. Bradley," said John Wade laughing, "but you shouldn't allude to hash in an aristocratic household. I shall be glad to have you carry out your plan."

"I hope you'll speak to your uncle about my nephew, Mr. John. He gets very poor pay where he is."

"I won't forget him," said John carelessly.

In his heart he thought Thomas Bradley a very low,

obtrusive fellow, whom he felt by no means inclined to assist, but it was cheap to make promises.

The reader understands now why Mrs. Bradley made a morning call at Gilbert & Mack's store.

She knew at what part of the counter her nephew was stationed, and made her way thither at once. He did not at first recognize her, until she said:

"Good-morning, Thomas."

"Good-morning, aunt. What brings you here this morning? Any good news for me? Has the old gentleman come round and concluded to do something handsome?"

"Mr. Wharton is not in the city. He has gone to Washington."

"I wish he'd get me an office there. He ought to have some influence with the government."

"That may come, Thomas, if you only have patience. In fact, Mr. John has promised to get something out of his uncle for you. But that isn't what I came about this morning."

"Are you only out shopping then?" said her nephew disappointed.

"No. You remember that boy who has been reading to Mr. Wharton?"

"One of our cash boys. Yes; there he is, just gone by."

"What do you think he's done?"

"I don't know, I'm sure."

"Stolen Mr. John's pocket-book and some jewelry belonging to him."

“You don’t say so?” exclaimed Thomas in real surprise.

“We suspected him and made him give up the key of his trunk. We found the articles under his clothes.”

“Why, I thought he was a little saint. He never swears or shirks work like the other boys. The firm think highly of him.”

“So did Mr. Wharton; but appearances are deceitful. He’s an artful young rascal, that’s what he is.”

“What have you done about it? What does Mr. Wharton say?”

“He’s away from home. He doesn’t know yet. Mr. John gave him a lecture and ordered him to leave the house.”

“Has he done it?”

“Yes; he couldn’t help it.”

“Does he admit that he took the things?”

“No; he denied it as bold as brass, but it didn’t do him any good. There were the things in the trunk. He couldn’t get over that.”

Thomas fastened a shrewd glance on his aunt’s face, for he suspected the truth.

“So you’ve got rid of him?” he said. “What do you propose to do next?”

“Mr. John thinks your employers ought to know that he is a thief.”

“Are you going to tell them?”

“I want you to do it.”

Thomas Bradley was far from being an estimable young man, but he was not without good qualities. He

suspected that Frank had been wronged, and he did not care to interfere with his aunt's plans. But when it came to depriving Frank of his humble situation in the store he could not help feeling an emotion of pity for the friendless boy.

"Come, aunt," he said, "that's going too far. You've driven the poor devil out of the house. Be satisfied with that."

"He'll be trying to get back again if he stays in the city, and he will stay if he keeps his situation. Mr. John thinks Gilbert & Mack ought to be told."

"Then you must tell them yourself, aunt. I shan't."

"Really, Thomas, you don't seem to understand your own interests. If this boy is out of the way you will stand a better chance of getting into favor with Mr. Wharton."

"I don't want the boy to starve."

"He won't. His friends live in the country, and he will go back to them. He'll be better off there."

"Maybe so, but it's rather dirty business. I'd rather you'd tell Mr. Gilbert yourself."

"Then introduce me to him, Thomas, and I'll do it."

"Follow me, aunt."

He led his aunt to the rear of the store, where Mr. Gilbert was standing.

"Mr. Gilbert," he said, "allow me to introduce my aunt, Mrs. Bradley."

The housekeeper was courteously received and invited to be seated. She soon opened her business, and blackened poor Frank's character as she had intended.

“Really, Mrs. Bradley, I am sorry to hear this,” said Mr. Gilbert. “You think there is no doubt of the boy’s guilt?”

“I am sorry to say that I have no doubt at all,” said the housekeeper hypocritically. “It was a great shock to me, I can assure you, Mr. Gilbert.”

“Had you observed anything in his conduct before that excited suspicion?”

“I had missed several things, but I was far from connecting Frank with their loss. Mr. Gilbert, he is a very artful boy.”

“Mr. Mack and myself have had a very good opinion of him. He is faithful and prompt.”

“I have no doubt of it. But what is all without honesty? Of course, sir, you will retain him in your employ if you are willing to take the risk, but I thought it my duty to put you on your guard.”

“I am obliged to you, Mrs. Bradley; though, as I said, I regret to find that my confidence in the boy has been misplaced.”

“Then, sir, I won’t detain you any longer. Good-morning, sir.”

“Good-morning.”

Mrs. Bradley swept out of the store triumphantly, casting one glance only at Frank.

“I’ve settled his hash!” she thought. “I fancy his race is about run. He’ll have to go back to the country.”

Late in the afternoon Frank was called to the cashier’s desk.

"I am directed by Mr. Gilbert to say that your services will not be required after to-day," he said. "Here are this week's wages."

"Why am I discharged? What have I done?" demanded Frank, while his heart sunk within him.

"I don't know. You must ask Mr. Gilbert. But it won't do any good."

"I will speak to him, at any rate," and Frank walked up to the senior partner, and addressed him the same question.

"Can you not guess?" asked Mr. Gilbert sternly.

"I can guess that a false accusation has been brought against me," said Frank.

"A respectable lady has informed me that you are not honest. I regret it, for I have been pleased with your diligence. Of course I cannot retain you in my employ."

"Mr. Gilbert," said Frank earnestly, "the charge is false. Mrs. Bradley is my enemy, and wishes me harm. I don't understand how the things came into my trunk, but I didn't put them there."

"I hope you are innocent, but I must still discharge you. Business is dull now, and I have decided to part with four of my cash boys. I won't pass judgment upon you, but you must go."

Frank bowed in sad silence, for he saw that further entreaty would be vain, and left the store more dispirited than at any moment since he had been in the city.

CHAPTER XXV.

OUT OF WORK.



FIVE DAYS Frank spent in fruitless efforts to obtain a place. Wherever he saw on a window "Boy Wanted," he called, but if there was still a vacancy he was always asked if he had worked elsewhere in the city.

On answering "at Gilbert & Mack's," the further question was asked, "Why did you leave them?"

He might have answered because trade was dull, but this he felt would be only evading the truth. So he said frankly, "Because an enemy made a false charge against me."

"Of what kind?" asked the merchant suspiciously.

"She accused me of stealing!" answered Frank, flushing painfully.

"And they believed the charge?"

"They did not feel sure, but as they were intending to discharge four of their cash boys they included me in the number."

"Then they would not give you a recommendation?"

"I am afraid not," said Frank uncomfortably.

"We can't take you without a recommendation," said the merchant decidedly. "We can get plenty of boys who are well recommended and have never incurred suspicion of dishonesty."

"But I am not dishonest," said Frank indignantly.

"I do not judge or accuse you, but under the circumstances I can't take you."

This was the general answer which our hero's applications received. His own frankness stood in his way. Yet he never tried to conceal the real state of the case. It would have made him uncomfortable to obtain a place under false pretenses.

All this time his money steadily diminished. He perceived that he would soon be penniless. Evidently something must be done. He formed two determinations. The first was to write to Mr. Wharton, who he thought must now have returned from Washington, asserting his innocence and appealing to him to see Gilbert & Mack, and re-establish him in their confidence. The second was, since he could not obtain a regular place, to frequent the wharves and seek chances to carry bundles. In this way he might earn enough, with great economy, to pay for his board and lodging.

One morning the housekeeper entered the library, where John Wade sat reading the daily papers.

"Mr. John," she said, holding out a letter, "here is a letter from that boy. I expected he would write to your uncle."

"How do you know it is from him, Mrs. Bradley?"

"I recognize the handwriting. I know his capital letters."

John Wade deliberately opened the letter.

"We will see what the young scamp says, Mrs. Bradley," he remarked. "It is best to guard against his

lies. The young beggar writes a very good hand," he commented. "Sit down, Mrs. Bradley, and I will read the letter aloud."

It will be only necessary to quote the concluding sentences :

"I hope, Mr. Wharton, you will not be influenced against me by what Mrs. Bradley and your nephew say. I don't know why it is, but they are my enemies, though I have always treated them with respect. I am afraid they have a desire to injure me in your estimation. ('Confound his impudence!' ejaculated the reader.) If they had not they would have been content with driving me from your house, without also slandering me to my employers and inducing them to discharge me. ('That means you, Mrs. Bradley.') Since I was discharged I have tried very hard to get another place, but as I cannot bring a recommendation from Gilbert & Mack, I have everywhere been refused. I ask you, Mr. Wharton to consider my situation. Already my small supply of money is nearly gone, and I do not know how I am to pay my expenses. If it was any fault of mine that brought me into this situation I would not complain, but it seems hard to suffer when I am innocent. I do not ask to return to your house, Mr. Wharton, for it wouldn't be pleasant, since your nephew and Mrs. Bradley dislike me, but I have a right to ask that the truth may be told to my employers, so that if they do not wish me to return to their service they may at least be willing to give me a recommendation that will give me a place elsewhere."

"It is just the letter to work on the mind of your uncle, Mr. John," said the housekeeper. "He was always soft-hearted."

"He's been uncommon soft about this boy," muttered John.

"Of course it isn't best that Mr. Wharton should see the letter."

"Of course. I am not such a fool as to give it to him."

"But the boy may write another."

"Very likely he will. If he does, you must take possession and bring it to me."

"I will if I can, Mr. John."

"There isn't any difficulty, is there?"

"Not now, while your uncle is away. But you know he sometimes gets up early and sees the letters before I do. I have known him to meet the postman in the street and take the mail from him. So he might get hold of a letter."

"True," said John Wade thoughtfully. "I wish the boy was well out of the way."

"He will have to leave the city if he can't get anything to do."

"Yes; but he may get something to do. He is just obstinate enough to stay in the city, because he knows he is not wanted here."

"Then what do you propose to do, Mr. John?"

"I don't know yet; I must think it over. I must prevent the boy communicating with my uncle if it is a possible thing. 'Strike while the iron is hot,' I say."

"I think that is very judicious, Mr. John. I have no doubt you will know how to manage matters."

With this bit of flattery, which she knew would be acceptable, Mrs. Bradley left the room.

“Yes,” said John Wade to himself, “I must think it over. I am playing for a high stake, and I must leave nothing undone that will promote my fortunes. This boy is more dangerous than Mrs. Bradley has any idea of. I am convinced that he is my cousin and the rightful heir to my uncle’s property. But he must never know it. Strange that circumstances should have brought him into his own grandfather’s house. If I were inclined to be superstitious now I might fancy that there was a Providence in it or a fatality. But, thank heaven, I am not so foolish. It is only chance, and I must overrule it and crush my possible rival.”

John Wade dressed himself for a walk, and drawing out a cigar, descended the steps of his uncle’s house into the street.

“I can think up some plan as I walk,” he said.

He reached Fifth Avenue and walked slowly down town. He was about opposite Twenty-eighth Street when he came face to face with the subject of his thoughts.

Frank had been lucky enough to get a bundle to carry, and that accounted for his presence on Fifth Avenue at that early hour.

“The devil is always near when you are thinking about him,” thought John. “I will stop and speak to the young rascal.”

“Where are you going?” he demanded sternly.

Our hero looked up, for the first time aware of his enemy’s approach.

"Mr. Wade!" he exclaimed in surprise.

"Did you hear my question? Where are you going?"

"I don't know that I am bound to answer your questions," answered Frank quietly, "but I have no objection. I am going to Thirty-ninth Street with this bundle."

"Have you found a place, then?" asked John, disappointed.

"No, sir; you and Mrs. Bradley have taken care that I should not, but I get a chance to run errands occasionally."

"Hark you, boy! I have something to say to you," continued John Wade harshly. "You have had the impudence to write to my uncle."

"Did he receive the letter?" asked Frank eagerly.

"It came this morning."

"What did he say?"

"Nothing that you would like to hear. He looks upon you as a thief."

"Does he believe that I am a thief?"

"He feels no doubt about it. He despises you now as much as he once liked you."

This touched Frank nearly. He cared little for the good opinion of John Wade, but that his old friend and benefactor should think him unworthy of confidence and a thief, was a bitter thought.

"You have slandered me to him, Mr. Wade," he said angrily. "You might be in better business than accusing a poor boy falsely."

"You impudent young scamp! How dare you speak

to me in that manner?" said John Wade menacingly. "I have a great mind to have you arrested."

"Have you not injured me enough already? You have taken from me my best friend and my situation. That ought to satisfy you," said Frank bitterly.

"Hark you, young man ! I have had enough of your impudence. I will give you a bit of advice which you will do well to follow. Leave this city for a place where you are not known, or I may feel disposed to shut you up on a charge of theft."

"I shall not leave the city, Mr. Wade," returned Frank firmly. "I shall stay here in spite of you," and without waiting for an answer he walked on.

John Wade followed him with a venomous glance.

"There is no other way," he muttered. "I must crush him!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

AN ACCOMPLICE IS FOUND.



T HAS often been remarked that when we are bent on doing mischief we have little trouble in securing an agent or accomplice. This was at all events the case with John Wade.

No sooner had he parted from our hero than he saw approaching him a dark, sinister-looking man, whom he had known years before under circumstances which left no doubt as to his unscrupulousness and want of principle.

“Good-morning, Mr. Wade,” said the new-comer obsequiously.

“Good-morning, Mr. Graves. Are you busy just now?”

“No, sir; I am out of employment. I have been unfortunate.”

“Then I will give you a job. Do you see that boy?” said John Wade rapidly.

“The boy with a bundle?” asked the other.

“Yes.”

“I see him.”

“I want you to follow him. Find out where he lives, and let me know this evening. Do you understand?”

“I understand. But where do you live, Mr. Wade?”

John Wade hastily scribbled his address on a card and handed it to him.

“Don’t delay,” he said hurriedly, “or he will escape you. Let me see you this evening.”

“You may rely upon me, sir,” answered Nathan Graves, and quickening his pace he soon came within a hundred feet of our hero.

He preserved this distance between them, not wishing to excite suspicion in Frank’s mind or allow him to suppose that he was watched. Such a suspicion, however, was not likely to occur to the boy’s mind. Brought up in the country, he knew nothing of plots or conspiracies, and though he was aware of John Wade’s hostility, he supposed he had nothing more to fear from him.

After fulfilling his errand he walked down town again, but did not succeed in obtaining any further employment. Wherever he went he was followed by Graves. Unconsciously he exhausted the patience of that gentleman, who got heartily tired of his tramp about the streets. But the longest day will come to an end, and at last he had the satisfaction of tracking Frank to his humble lodging. Then, and not till then, he felt justified in leaving him.

After taking a frugal supper at a cheap restaurant—for his purse was at a low ebb—Nathan Graves sought the residence of John Wade. He rang the bell as the clock struck eight.

“Well, what success?” asked Wade when they met.

“I have tracked the boy. That is what you wanted?”

“Yes.”

“What more can I do for you?” asked Graves with a strong feeling of curiosity.

“I am hardly prepared to say. In fact I believe I will consult you. As you will guess, I have no friendly purpose. He stands in my way.”

“Well, do you want him put out of the way?” asked the other significantly.

John Wade started. Bad as he was, he shrank from the evident meaning of his companion.

“Hush!” said he. “I am not prepared to go as far as that.”

“What, then, do you want?”

“I want to get him away from the city. The fact is—I may as well tell you—my uncle has taken a great fancy to the boy, and might be induced to adopt him and cut me off from my rightful inheritance. The boy is an artful young rascal, and has been doing all he could to get into the good graces of my uncle, who is old and weak-minded. You see my object, don’t you?”

“I don’t see how a boy in his position managed to approach a gentleman like your uncle.”

“Then I will tell you how it happened, in order that you may the better comprehend the situation.”

The story, colored in the telling, need not be repeated here, nor need I detail the subsequent conversation, since the plan finally agreed upon will be understood as the story proceeds.

It was nine o’clock when Nathan Graves left the house, John Wade himself accompanying him to the door.

“How soon do you think you can carry out my instructions?” asked Wade.

“To-morrow, if possible.”

“The sooner the better.”

“I understand. I will spare no efforts,” was the answer.

“It is lucky I fell in with him,” said Nathan Graves to himself with satisfaction as he slowly walked down Fifth Avenue. “It’s a queer business, but that’s none of my business. The main thing for me to consider is, that it brings money to my purse, and of that I have need enough.”

Parsimonious in general, John Wade was willing to pay in such a case as the present, and Graves left the house richer by a hundred dollars than he entered it.

“I must see Dan,” soliloquized Graves. “He’s got a crib over in Jersey that will do for a cage for the young ’un. He won’t mind letting me have the loan of it cheap. That’ll answer to begin with. We can decide about the rest later.”

He dropped into a cigar store and bought a choice Havana, which he smoked with great apparent enjoyment.

“I haven’t been able to afford such luxuries lately,” he said to himself. “Luck’s turned, I hope.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

A PHILOSOPHIC BOOTBLACK.



ABOUT eleven o'clock on the forenoon of the next day Frank walked up Canal Street toward Broadway. He had been down to the wharves since early in the morning seeking for employment. He had offered his services to many, but as yet had been unable to secure a job. Things were beginning to look serious to our hero. He was not earning enough to pay his daily expenses, not to mention the obligation which he had assumed to pay his sister's board. He was not wholly discouraged, but he was forced to think seriously of the future. Things could not remain long as they were.

"Shine yer boots, mister," said a bootblack, judging from our hero's dress that he was in comfortable circumstances.

"Yes, if you'll shine 'em for nothing," said Frank good-humoredly.

"That ain't my way of doin' business," said the ragged knight of the brush. "You don't see any green in my eyes, does yer?"

"I thought you might be blacking boots for pleasure."

"Not much," was the reply. "If it's a pleasure to you, just shine up my shoes."

As he spoke he extended a foot only partially covered by a dilapidated apology for a shoe, through the holes of which—for he wore no stockings—some dingy skin was visible.

“Where did you buy those shoes?” asked Frank jocosely.

“Buy ‘em! I didn’t buy ‘em. They was left me by my grandfather, who wore ‘em seventeen years himself afore he kicked the bucket. He left them shoes to me in his will. They was all he did leave me, and I wear ‘em out of regard for him.”

“Do you make it pay blacking boots?” asked Frank.

“What do you want to know for? Do you want to go into it?” asked the boy shrewdly.

“I don’t know but I shall,” said Frank seriously.

“I’ve got to earn my living some way.”

“Oh, you’re gassin’,” said the bootblack incredulously.

“No, I am not. I’ve been trying to get a living carrying bundles, but I can’t get much to do.”

“That don’t go down. A chap that wears good clo’es like you ain’t a baggage-smasher.”

“I haven’t been long, but I am now. I was a cash boy.”

“Did you get sacked?”

“What’s that?”

“Where was you brung up that you don’t understand plain English? Was you politely informed that you wasn’t wanted no longer?”

“Oh! that’s what you mean?” said Frank smiling.

“Yes I was.”

"I never was sacked, 'cause I'm in business for myself. I'm free and independent."

"I see you are. Now about your profits?"

"Well, sometimes business is good, and then again it ain't. This mornin' I've took in seventy cents."

"Have you? That's good."

"That'll do. I'm goin' to the Old Bowery to-night, if nothin' happens. There's a stavin' play up now. Seen it?"

"No; what is it?"

"It's 'The Gory Gladiator; or, The Pool of Blood.'"

"Is it one of Shakespeare's plays?" asked Frank smiling.

"Not much," said the bootblack scornfully. "I seen one of Shakespeare's plays once. He can't begin to write a play like the 'Gory Gladiator.' It's bully."

"How much does a box and brush cost?" asked Frank.

"New?"

"Yes."

"'Bout fifty or sixty cents. Maybe you could get one second-hand."

"I think I'd rather buy new ones, that is if I go into the business."

"There's a good place on Nassau Street, where you can buy cheap. I'll tell yer the number. Jest say that Jolly Jack sent you, and they'll take off five cents. They know me."

"Thank you—I'll remember."

At this moment the philosophical bootblack received

a summons from a gentleman who required his services, and the interview terminated abruptly.

Frank walked on slowly and thoughtfully.

“I never expected to be reduced to blacking boots for a living,” he said to himself, “but I may have to come to it. It won’t be very pleasant, but it’s better than starving, and better than going to the poor-house. I suppose Tom Pinkerton would exult if he knew how badly I am getting along.”

This was not a pleasant reflection for our hero. He had started out to earn his own living with high hopes of doing fairly at once, and gradually working his way up to a good social and business position. He felt that he might still have done it, but for the unaccountable enmity of John Wade and the housekeeper. Through their means he had lost employment and reputation and cut off from the prospect of future prosperity. It was hard, and he felt it to be so. But none the less something must be done.

“I will wait till to-morrow,” he said to himself, “and if nothing turns up by that time I will go to Nassau Street, and buy a blacking-brush.”

At this moment a man addressed him:

“Will you be kind enough to direct me to Broadway?”

It was Nathan Graves, with whom Frank was destined to have some unpleasant experiences.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CAUGHT IN A TRAP.



F COURSE Nathan Graves knew well enough where Broadway was, but the question enabled him to open a conversation with our hero.

“Straight ahead,” answered Frank. “I am going there, and will show you, if you like.”

“Thank you, I wish you would. I am not very familiar with the city.”

“I have not been here long myself,” said Frank.

“I live only fifteen or twenty miles distant,” said Graves, “but I don’t often come to the city, and am not much acquainted. I keep a dry goods store, but my partner generally comes here to buy goods. By the way, perhaps you can help me about the errand that calls me here to-day.”

“I will, sir, if I can,” said Frank politely.

“My youngest clerk has just left me, and I want to find a successor—a boy about your age, say. Do you know any one who would like such a position?”

Frank thought instantly: “Here is a chance for me,” and he answered eagerly:

“I am out of employment myself just now. Do you think I will suit?”

“I think you will,” said Mr. Graves, “that is, if you have a little knowledge of the dry goods business.”

"I have, sir. I have been for some weeks in a New York store, and, though only a cash boy, I learned something about goods and prices."

"The very thing!" answered Nathan Graves. "You won't object to go into the country?"

"No, sir. Of course I prefer the city, but business is dull, and it is hard getting a place."

"I will give you five dollars a week and your board for the present. If you suit me, your pay will be raised at the end of six months."

This offer was beyond our hero's expectations. It would at once relieve him from embarrassment, and enable him still to pay Grace's board.

"Will that be satisfactory?" asked his companion.

"Quite so, sir. When do you wish me to come?"

"Can you go out with me this afternoon?"

"Yes, sir. I only want to go home and pack up my trunk."

"To save time I will go with you, and we will start as soon as possible. I am very busy now, and could hardly spare time to come into the city. I am fortunate in meeting you, as it saves me considerable trouble."

Frank was rather surprised that Mr. Graves should be willing to make an immediate engagement with a stranger, without making any inquiry as to where he had worked, or under what circumstances he had left his place. He inwardly congratulated himself on this, as it saved him from an embarrassing explanation, which might not have proved satisfactory.

As proposed, Nathan Graves accompanied him to his

room, where his scanty wardrobe was soon packed. A hack was called, and they were speedily on their way to the Courtlandt Street ferry.

They crossed the ferry, and Mr. Graves purchased two tickets to Elizabeth. He bought a paper and occupied himself in reading. Frank did not regret the silence of his companion. The road was new to him, and he found enough to interest him in the villages and towns through which they passed in their brief ride. It was a bright, sunshiny day, and his spirits rose. He felt that fortune had begun to shine upon him once more. In the morning his prospects had been gloomy and unpromising enough. Now he had by a strange piece of good luck obtained a good place in which there was a chance of promotion. By and by he could send for Grace and get her boarded near him. As soon as his wages were raised he determined to do this. While engaged in these pleasant speculations they reached the station.

"We get out here," said Mr. Graves, and he led the way out of the car.

"Is your store in this place?" asked Frank.

"No; it is in the next town."

Frank was rather sorry for this. He could see that Elizabeth was a flourishing and populous village, and he thought he should enjoy living there. However, the next town might prove equally pleasant.

Nathan Graves looked about him for a conveyance. He finally drove a bargain with a man driving a shabby looking vehicle, and the two took their seats.

They were driven about six miles through a flat,

unpicturesque country, when they reached a branch road leading away from the main road.

"Turn here," said Nathan Graves.

The driver did so.

It was a narrow road and apparently not much frequented. Frank could see no houses on either side.

"Is your store on this road?" he asked in some surprise.

"Oh, no; but I am not going to the store yet. We will go to my house and leave your trunk. It will be time enough to go to the store afterward."

They drove on, the road continuing narrow and lonesome.

"I forgot to mention that I live in rather an out-of-the-way place," said Graves. "It is inconvenient, but the place was left me by my father, and I don't like to leave it. There is a shorter way to the store across the fields. You don't mind walking a mile or so, do you?"

"Oh, no, sir; I am fond of walking."

"So am I. Some object to it. My last clerk did and that was the reason he had for leaving me."

"I can't afford to be particular," thought Frank, though he could not help acknowledging to himself that a location in the village would have suited him better.

At length the wagon stopped by Graves' orders in front of a gate hanging loosely by one hinge.

"We'll get out here," said Graves.

They jumped from the wagon and Graves paid the driver.

"Shall I help you in with the trunk?" he asked.

"No; the boy and I can manage that."

Frank looked with some curiosity and some disappointment at his future home. It was a square, unpainted house, discolored by time, and looked far from attractive. There were no outward signs of occupation, and everything about it appeared to have fallen into decay. Not far off was a barn, looking even more dilapidated than the house.

"It's rather lonely," said Graves, "but I think we can make you comfortable. Just help me in with the trunk."

At the front door, instead of knocking—there was no bell—Graves drew a rusty key from his pocket and inserted it in the lock. They found themselves in a small entry, uncarpeted and dingy.

"We'll go up-stairs," said Graves.

Arrived on the landing, he threw open a door and ushered in our hero.

"This will be your room," he said.

Frank looked around him in dismay.

It was a large, square room, uncarpeted and containing only a bed, two chairs and a wash-stand, all of the cheapest and rudest manufacture.

"I hope you will soon feel at home here," said Graves with an equivocal smile.

"I hope so," said Frank doubtfully.

"I'll go down and see if I can find something to eat," said Graves.

He went out, locking the door behind him.

"What does that mean?" thought Frank with a strange sensation.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FRANK AND HIS JAILER.



IT WAS twenty minutes before Frank, waiting impatiently, heard the steps of his late companion ascending the stairs.

He expected, of course, that the door would be unlocked, and he intended to inquire why he had been locked in. For though as yet he didn't suspect that he had fallen into a trap, he thought it strange that his new acquaintance should have so far forgotten his presence as to lock him in.

But the door was not unlocked. Instead, a slide was revealed, about eight inches square, through which his late traveling companion pushed a plate of cold meat and bread.

"Here's something to eat," he said. "Take it."

"Why do you lock me in?" demanded our hero angrily.

"Never mind. There's reasons," answered the other shortly.

"What reasons?"

"You can get along without knowing, I suppose," said the other with a sneer.

"I don't mean to," said Frank firmly. "I demand an explanation."

"Demand away, then," said Graves. "I'm willing."

"Let me out instantly," said our hero. "This is an outrage."

"Really now, you don't say so. What are you going to do about it?"

"I'd let you know if I was out," said Frank pluckily.

"Then it's lucky you're not out. You wouldn't do anything desperate, would you?"

"I would complain to the authorities."

"Oh, you would, would you? I am afraid I can't spare you long enough for that. But if you'll write to them and hand the letter to me, I'll carry it to them, *perhaps*."

"What motive have you in keeping me here? I am a perfect stranger to you. What good can a boy's imprisonment do you?" asked Frank.

"Why, that would be telling," said Graves. "Children mustn't know too much. It isn't good for them," he added mockingly.

"Will you tell me one thing?"

"That depends on what it is."

"How long do you intend to keep me here?"

"I am sorry I can't gratify your curiosity, but I don't know myself."

"It seems very strange," said Frank half to himself. "I never did you any harm. I never met you before this morning. Yet you entice me out here and lock me up. Perhaps," he added, with the sudden thought that a ransom might be expected—"perhaps you think that I am rich, but I am not. I have no money. You can't get anything out of me."

"Perhaps you have expectations?" suggested Graves.

"From whom can I have expectations?"

"I didn't say you had. I said perhaps you had."

"If that is what you are thinking of you may as well let me go. The few friends I have are all poor."

"That may be so, but I shall keep you."

"Let me go and I will say nothing about your entrapping me here."

"You are very kind, I am sure," said Graves, with a mocking bow. "I don't know how to thank you for your consideration, but it doesn't suit my purposes to part company with you just yet."

"If I get free in spite of you, I will see that you are punished for this outrage," said Frank.

"Crow away, my chicken. I'm obliged to you for letting me know your intentions, as it will make me extra careful to keep you here."

"I suppose that was all a lie about your keeping a store."

"It was a pretty little story told for your amusement, my dear boy," said Graves. "I was afraid you wouldn't come without it."

"You are a villain!" said Frank, with excusable indignation.

"Look here, boy," said Graves in a different tone, his face darkening, "you had better not talk in that way. I may get angry, and if I do, imprisonment won't be the worst thing you will have to suffer."

"I am not afraid," said Frank boldly.

"I will take means to make you afraid. I sha'n't stand any more of your impudence. But I have no more time to waste. I advise you to eat your dinner

and be quiet. Some supper will be brought to you before night."

So saying he abruptly closed the slide and descended the stairs, leaving Frank to his reflections, which, it may be supposed, were not of the pleasantest character.

CHAPTER XXX.

WHAT FRANK DISCOVERED.



RANK did not allow his unpleasant situation to take away his appetite, and though he was fully determined to make the earliest possible attempt to escape, he was sensible enough first to eat the food which his jailer had brought him.

It was not very palatable, but he was hungry, having taken but a scanty breakfast, and he left nothing upon the plate.

His lunch dispatched, he begun at once to resolve plans of escape.

“Why didn’t I think of the windows?” he reflected. “This room is only in the second story. There won’t be much danger in dropping down upon the grass beneath.”

He at once went to one of the front windows and tried to raise it, but all his efforts proved unavailing.

“What makes it stick so?” he thought.

But he soon found that he was mistaken as to the cause of the difficulty. The window did not stick, but it was securely nailed, so that it was quite impossible to raise it.

“I wonder if it is so with all the windows?” thought Frank.

There were three windows in the room—two on the front of the house, the other at the side.

He tried one after another, but the result was the same. All were so fastened that it was quite impossible to raise them.

"I suppose I might smash the window-frame," thought Frank. "But that would make a noise, and my jailer would come up. I won't do it now, at any rate."

There was another argument that induced Frank to postpone the carrying out of his purpose. The more he thought of it the more it struck him as singular that he should have been inveigled to this lonely place under the pretext of employment, only to be confined as a prisoner after he got here. Evidently his jailer, who appeared to be in his right mind, must have some object in view and probably some advantage to gain.

What could it be?

For the first time it flashed upon Frank that it might have something to do with the mystery that enveloped his early history. Might he not be an agent of some one who was familiar with that mystery? It seemed improbable, but everything relating to his situation here was improbable.

"I won't try to escape till to-morrow at any rate," he concluded. "Perhaps I can learn something by that time. It'll be rather dull staying here, but there's one comfort to a fellow out of employment—I shall get my board and lodging for nothing."

Looking out of the window for lack of occupation, he soon saw Nathan Graves emerge from the front door and walk away from the house.

“I wonder where he’s going?” thought our young hero.

Here he caught the glance of Graves, who raised his eyes to the window. On seeing his prisoner the latter smiled maliciously and waved his hand in token of farewell.

“Isn’t he coming back, I wonder?” thought Frank perplexed.

Feeling that he could probably escape through one of the windows when he pleased, though at the cost of considerable trouble, Frank did not trouble himself much or allow himself to feel unhappy. He decided to continue his explorations.

In the corner of the room was a door, probably admitting to a closet.

“I suppose it is locked,” thought Frank, but on trying it he found that such was not the case. He looked curiously about him, but found nothing to repay him. His attention was drawn, however, to several dark-colored masks lying upon a shelf.

“What can these be for?” he thought.

All at once there occurred to his memory a paragraph which he had read in one of the New York daily papers about several houses which had been entered by masked burglars who had robbed them after maltreating their inmates. Was it possible that this lonely house was one of their haunts, and his captor one of their number? But even if this conjecture proved correct, why should he have carried him off, unless as a recruit?

Frank discovered a small hole in the wall of the size

of a marble. Actuated by curiosity he applied his eye to the opening and peered into what was probably the adjoining room. It was furnished in very much the same way as the one in which he was confined, but at present it was untenanted. Having seen what little there was to be seen, Frank withdrew from his post of observation and returned to his room. His time would have hung heavily but that he found on a shelf in the closet a dog's-eared romance which, for want of something better to do, he begun to read.

It was several hours later when he again heard steps ascending the stairs, and the slide in the door moved.

He looked toward it, but the face that he saw was not that of Nathan Graves.

It was the face of a woman.

CHAPTER XXXI.

“OVER THE HILL TO THE POOR-HOUSE.”



WE ARE compelled for a time to leave our hero in the hands of his enemies, and return to the town of Crawford, where an event has occurred which influences seriously the happiness and position of his sister Grace.

Ever since Frank left the town Grace had been a welcome member of Mr. Pomeroy's family, receiving the kindest treatment from all, so that she had come to feel very much at home. The small sum which Frank paid for her board left no margin for profit, but for this neither Mr. nor Mrs. Pomeroy cared. They were in very moderate circumstances, but they felt that they were rich enough to afford to be kind. They were glad that Frank was doing well in the city, for they had not yet heard of his change of circumstances.

So they lived happily together, till one disastrous night a fire broke out, which consumed the house, and they were forced to snatch their clothes and escape, saving nothing else.

They were kindly received by the neighbors, but when morning came, and they realized the extent of the calamity, they were compelled instantly to form new plans for the future.

Mr. Pomeroy's house was insured for two-thirds of its

value, and he proposed to rebuild immediately, but it would be three months at least before the new house would be completed. In the interim he succeeded in hiring a couple of rooms for his family, but their narrow accommodations would oblige them to dispense with their boarder. Sorry as Mr. and Mrs. Pomeroy were to part with her, it was obvious that Grace must find another home.

"We must let Frank know," said Mr. Pomeroy; and having occasion to go up to the city at once to see about insurance, he went to the store of Gilbert & Mack and inquired for Frank.

"Fowler? What was he?" was asked.

"A cash boy."

"Oh, he is no longer here."

"No longer here? Why not? Has he found another place?"

"I don't know. Mr. Gilbert discharged him."

"Do you know why he was discharged?" asked Mr. Pomeroy, pained and startled.

"No; but there stands Mr. Gilbert. He can tell you."

Mr. Pomeroy introduced himself to the head of the firm and repeated his inquiry.

"If you are a friend of the lad," said Mr. Gilbert, "you will be sorry to learn that he was charged with dishonesty."

"Dishonesty! Frank Fowler dishonest!" exclaimed Mr. Pomeroy incredulously. "Why, I would trust him with untold gold."

"It was a very respectable lady who made the charge. It is only fair to say that the boy denied it, and that personally we found him faithful and trusty. But as the dullness of trade compelled us to discharge some of our cash boys we naturally discharged him among the number, without, however, judging his case."

"You would have retained him but for this charge?"

"Undoubtedly. He was one of the best of our boys."

"Then it seems to me, Mr. Gilbert, you did prejudice him without giving him a chance to defend himself. Did you give him a recommendation?"

"My dear sir, how could I, under the circumstances?"

"Then, sir, you have treated the boy very unfairly. On the strength of a charge not proved, you have dismissed him, though personally you had noticed nothing out of the way in him, and rendered it impossible for him to obtain another place."

"There is something in what you say, I admit. Perhaps I was too hasty. If you will send the boy to me, I will take him back on probation."

"Thank you, sir," said Mr. Pomeroy gratefully. "I will send him here."

But this Mr. Pomeroy was unable to do. He did not know of Frank's new address, and though he was still in the city he failed to find him.

He returned to Crawford and communicated the unsatisfactory intelligence. He tried to obtain a new boarding place for Grace, but no one was willing to take her at two dollars a week, especially when Mr. Pomeroy was compelled to admit that Frank was now out of employ-

ment, and it was doubtful if he would be able to keep up the payment.

Tom Pinkerton managed to learn that Grace was now without a home, and mentioned it to his father.

"Won't she have to go to the poor-house now, father?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes," said Deacon Pinkerton in a tone of satisfaction, for he had not forgiven or forgotten Frank's manly opposition to his will just after Mrs. Fowler's death. "There is no other place for her that I can see."

"Oh, I'm glad," said Tom maliciously. "Won't that upstart's pride be taken down. He was too proud to go to the poor-house where he belonged, but he can't help his sister's going there. If he isn't a pauper himself, he'll be the brother of a pauper, and that's the next thing to it."

"You should not rejoice in the downfall of others, even if they deserve it," said the deacon, but he spoke very mildly, and evidently did not very heartily disapprove his son's spirit.

"How can I help rejoicing, father, when I think how disrespectful he was to you," said Tom hypocritically.

"That is true," said the deacon. "He was very impudent in return for my kindness. Still I am sorry for him."

I am afraid the deacon's sorrow was not very deep, for he certainly looked unusually cheerful when he harnessed up his horse and drove round to the temporary home of the Pomeroy's.

"Good-morning, Mr. Pomeroy," he said, seeing the latter in the yard. "You've met with a severe loss."

"Yes, deacon, it is severe to a poor man like me."

"Goin' to build soon?"

"Yes, sir, as soon as I get insurance matters arranged."

"To be sure. Well, I've called round to relieve you of a part of your cares."

"What's that?"

"I am going to take Grace Fowler to the poor-house."

"Poor girl!" said Mr. Pomeroy sorrowfully. "Will she have to go there?"

"To be sure. Where else can she go?"

"Couldn't you get her a place with a private family to help about the house in return for her board while she goes to school?"

"There's nobody wants a young girl like her," said the deacon.

"Her brother would pay part of her board—that is, when he has a place."

"Hasn't he got a place?" asked the deacon, pricking up his ears. "I heard he was in a store in New York."

"He lost his place," said Mr. Pomeroy reluctantly, "partly because of the dullness of general trade."

"Then I guess we'll have to find him a place in the poor-house, too," said the deacon in evident satisfaction.

"Frank Fowler will never need such aid as that," said Mr. Pomeroy decidedly. "He'd sooner black boots for a living."

"Poor and proud!" repeated the deacon with a sneer.

"It's an honest pride. I should like to see more of it."

"At any rate he can't maintain his sister. She will have to go to the poor-house."

"I am afraid she will," said Mr. Pomeroy soberly. "Don't you need a little girl in your own family, Deacon Pinkerton? Grace is a good girl, and industrious, and you would find that she would earn her board."

"I should not be willing to have a little girl in my family," said the deacon coldly, "nor would my wife. Will you ask her to get ready, and I'll take her over to the poor-house?"

There was no alternative. Mr. Pomeroy went into the house and broke the sad news to his wife and Grace. It is hard to say which felt most. But Grace was too considerate to add to the sadness of her kind friends by crying, though she with difficulty restrained her tears.

"Never mind," she said with attempted cheerfulness, though her lips quivered, "I sha'n't have to stay there long. Frank will be sure to send for me."

She did not know that Frank was out of a place.

"It's too bad, Grace," said Sam, looking red about the eyes; "it's too bad that you should have to go to the poor-house."

"Come and see me, Sam," said Grace. "You know I shall be lonely and miss you all *so much*."

"Yes, I will, Grace. I'll come often, too. You sha'n't stay there long."

"Good-by," said Grace faltering. "You have all been very kind to me."

"Good-by, my dear child," said Mrs. Pomeroy. "Who knows but what you can return to us after the new house is done?"

So poor Grace went out from her pleasant home to find the deacon, grim-faced and stern, waiting for her.

"Jump in, little girl," he said. "You've kept me waiting for you a long time, and my time is valuable."

Grace could not answer. The contrast between his cold tones and the kind words of the friends she had just left was too great. She put her handkerchief to her eyes and wiped away the tears that would come.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE POOR-HOUSE.



HE DISTANCE to the poor-house was about a mile and a half. For the first half-mile Deacon Pinkerton kept silence. Then he begun to speak in a tone of cold condescension, as if it were a favor for such a superior being to address an insignificant child about to become a pauper.

"Little girl, have you heard from your brother lately?"

"Not very lately, sir."

"What is he doing?"

"He is in a store."

"I apprehend you are mistaken. He has lost his place. He has been turned away," said the deacon with satisfaction.

"Frank turned away! Oh, sir, you must be mistaken."

"Little girl," said the deacon sternly, "what do you mean by telling me that I am mistaken?"

"I didn't mean any harm, sir, but Frank is so good I didn't see how they could turn him away."

"Probably he was impudent to his employer," said the deacon.

"Frank is never impudent," said Grace, forgetting

her awe of the deacon in her desire to defend the brother she loved.

“How dare you say this to me? He was very impudent to me at the time I called to carry you both to the poor-house.”

“Frank did not mean to be impudent,” faltered Grace.

“Humph! there may be a difference of opinion about that.”

“He did not want to go to the poor-house.”

“I know that. He said he could support you both. Now it appears that he can’t support himself. Such pride as his is sure to have a fall.”

“Will you be kind enough to tell me how you found out that Frank had lost his place?” asked Grace, who hoped that there might be some mistake, and that Deacon Pinkerton had been misinformed.

“Mr. Pomeroy told me. He found out yesterday when he went to the city.”

Poor Grace, she could no longer doubt now, and her brother’s misfortune saddened her even more than her own.

“Perhaps he’s got a better place,” she ventured timidly.

“No, he hasn’t,” snapped the deacon. “Don’t delude yourself with such vain hopes. He’s been turned off for bad conduct, and it won’t be easy for him to get another place. If he had he would have written to Mr. Pomeroy immediately. He hasn’t written because he was ashamed to. That’s the reason you haven’t heard from him.”

Grace did not answer. She was a little girl, and she felt unable to cope with the autocrat of the town. But this did not turn the deacon to mercy. He enjoyed her confusion and dejection, and he proceeded:

“Probably you will soon see your brother.”

“O, do you think so, sir?” asked Grace joyfully.

“Yes,” answered the deacon grimly. “He will find himself in danger of starvation in the city, and he’ll creep back, only too glad to obtain a nice, comfortable home in the poor-house.”

But Grace knew her brother better than that. She knew his courage, his self-reliance, and his independent spirit, and she was sure the deacon was mistaken.

“I don’t think he will come,” she said quietly.

“You don’t think he will come!” repeated the deacon angrily. “Didn’t you hear me say he would?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then how dare you contradict me?”

“I didn’t mean to contradict you, sir; but I know Frank would do anything rather than come back.”

“We will see, we will see. His pride will have a fall. He will be glad to accept the comfortable home the town so kindly provides—a home for which you, little girl, ought to feel very grateful—yes, *very* grateful.”

The home for which Grace was expected to be so grateful was now in sight. It was a dark, neglected-looking house, situated in the midst of barren fields, and had a lonely and desolate aspect. It was superintended by Mr. and Mrs. Chase, distant relations of Deacon Pinkerton, and being poor, had obtained the charge

of the poor-establishment through their influential relative.

Mr. Chase was an inoffensive man, but Mrs. Chase had a violent temper, of which not only the paupers but her husband stood in awe. She was at work in the kitchen when Deacon Pinkerton drove up. Hearing the sound of wheels, she came to the door.

"Mrs. Chase," said the deacon, "I've brought you a little girl, to be placed under your care."

"What's her name?" inquired the lady slipping down her sleeves over her arms.

"Grace Fowler."

"Grace, humph! Why didn't she have a decent name? Grace is too fine for a pauper."

Grace might have answered that when her name was given it was not expected that she would become a pauper, and that that contingency hadn't been considered; but she did not feel like speaking. She was gazing with a sense of discomfort and fear at the forbidding countenance of the woman who was to have charge of her.

"You can call her anything you like," said the deacon. "Jump out, little girl."

Grace managed to get out of the wagon unaided, and the deacon handed out her modest bundle of clothes, tied up in a pocket-handkerchief.

"Anything new, Mrs. Chase?" he asked.

"Not much. Old Nathan got fractious because I wouldn't give him two cups of tea."

"Very unreasonable. I hope you didn't do it."

“Not I. The paupers don’t get no more’n their reg’lar allowance out of me, I can tell you.”

Mrs. Chase did not look like a woman likely to pamper the paupers over whom she held sway. She was not a woman likely to be led away by the warmth of her feelings.

“You have done quite right,” said the deacon—
“quite right. Be firm, Mrs. Chase.”

“I mean to be. Come in, little gal. What do you stand there staring at me for?”

“Little girl, you must behave well,” said Deacon Pinkerton, by way of a parting admonition. “The town expects it. I expect it. You must never cease to be grateful for the good home which it provides you free of expense. But for the town you would starve in all probability.”

Grace did not reply. Looking in the face of her future task-mistress was scarcely calculated to awaken a very deep feeling of gratitude. She quietly obeyed orders, and entered the house with her bundle under her arm.

“Good morning, Mrs. Chase,” said the deacon. “I’m in a hurry and must be going. If you should have any trouble with the girl just let me know.”

“If I have any trouble with her I’ll settle her hash myself,” returned Mrs. Chase with characteristic refinement. “I sha’n’t have no call to trouble you.”

The deacon smiled.

“You know your business, Mrs. Chase,” he said approvingly.

"I reckon I do," remarked the lady as she entered the house and closed the door.

"Now," said she, addressing her new boarder, "just take off your things, Betsy, and make yourself useful."

"My name isn't Betsy, ma'am."

"It isn't, isn't it?"

"No; it is Grace."

"You don't say so. I'll tell you one thing, I sha'n't allow anybody to contradict me here, and your name's got to be Betsy while you're in this house."

"Why mayn't I have my own name?" asked Grace.

"Because I say so," returned Mrs. Chase, stamping her foot. "None of your impudence, miss, or I'll beat you black and blue. Now take off your things and hang them up on that peg. I'm going to set you right to work."

"Yes, ma'am," said Grace alarmed.

"There's some dishes I want washed, Betsy, and I won't have you loitering over your work neither."

"Very well, ma'am."

"I ain't goin' to encourage you in laziness, I can tell you that. I make all my folks take right hold. Clear out of here, old Nathan. I won't have you round."

These last words were addressed to an old man who had opened the door from the next room, and seemed disposed to come in. But Mrs. Chase flourished her broom in his face, and he drew back timidly.

"Mrs. Chase, ma'am, I don't feel well," he said in a quavering voice. "May I go to bed?"

"No, you sha'n't," snapped Mrs. Chase. "I'm not

goin' to have the beds tumbled up in the day-time by lazy men-folks like you. Ain't the nights long enough for you?"

"You needn't make it up again," pleaded the old man. "I feel very unwell."

"It's no use talking," said the virago. "Go to bed you sha'n't, you lazy old man."

Old Nathan closed the door with a sigh and hobbled back to his place, while Mrs. Chase resumed her work.

Such was the new home for which poor Grace was expected to be grateful.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE HOUSEKEEPER.



RANK looked with some surprise at the woman who was looking through the slide in his door. He had expected to see Nathan Graves. She also regarded him with interest.

"I have brought you some supper," she said in a low, listless tone.

Frank reached out and drew in a small waiter containing a cup of tea and a plate of toast.

"Thank you," he said. "Where is the man who brought me here?"

"He has gone out."

"When will he be back?"

"I do not know."

"Do you know why he keeps me here in confinement?"

"No," said the woman hastily. "I know nothing. I see much, but I know nothing."

There was something peculiar in her tone, and Frank looked at her more attentively. She was a woman of forty-five, apparently, but might have been younger. There were traces of sadness and suffering in her worn face, and an air of melancholy, as of one who had little hope of better days.

“I have seen something, too,” said Frank. “I have seen some black masks in the closet. Can you tell me what they mean?”

“Ask me nothing,” said the woman hastily. “It is not prudent for me to speak.”

“Are many prisoners brought here as I have been?” asked our hero in spite of the woman’s refusal to speak.

“No.”

“I can’t understand what object they can have in detaining me. If I were rich I might guess, but I am poor. I am compelled to work for my daily bread, and have been out of a place for two weeks.”

“Were you always poor?” asked the woman thoughtfully.

“Always.”

“Have you no rich relations who would pay for your ransom?”

“I have none.”

“I don’t understand,” she said in a low voice, rather to herself than to him. “But I cannot wait. I must not stand here. I will come up in fifteen minutes, and if you wish another cup of tea, or some more toast, I will bring them.”

Without waiting for an answer, she left the door and descended the stairs.

“It is strange she stays here,” thought Frank as he sipped his tea. “She looks like a good woman, and I think this house is frequented by thieves, or characters as bad.”

His confinement did not affect his appetite, for he en-

joyed his tea and toast; and when, as she had promised, the woman came up, he told her he would like another cup of tea and some more toast.

“Will you answer one question?” asked our hero.

“I don’t know,” answered the woman in a flurried tone.

“You look like a good woman. Why do you stay in such a house as this?”

“I will tell you, though I should do better to be silent. But you won’t betray me?”

“On no account.”

“I was poor, starving, when I had an application to come here. The man who engaged me told me that it was to be a housekeeper, and I had no suspicion of the character of the house—that it was a den of——”

She stopped short, but Frank understood what she would have said.

“When I discovered the character of the house, I would have left but for two reasons. First, I had no other home; next, I had become acquainted with the secrets of the house, and they would have feared that I would reveal them. I should incur great risk. So I stayed.”

“Do you think they mean to keep me here long?”

“I do not know. I knew nothing of you till you were brought here. I may hear something of their motives in detaining you to-night, when they come home.”

“Will you tell me?”

“I don’t know. I won’t promise.”

Here there was a sound below. The woman started.

“Some one has come,” she said. “I must go down. I will come up as soon as I can with the rest of your supper.”

“Thank you. You need not hurry.”

Our hero was left to ponder over what he had heard. There was evidently a mystery connected with this lonely house—a mystery which he very much desired to solve. Whether he should be able to do so was doubtful. But there was one chance. Through the aperture in the closet he might both see and hear something, provided any persons should meet there that evening.

The remainder of his supper was brought him by the same woman, but she was in haste, and he obtained no opportunity of exchanging another word with her.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

WHAT FRANK HEARD THROUGH THE CREVICE.



FRANK did not learn who it was that had arrived. Whoever it was remained downstairs. There was little noise of any kind for an hour or two. Then Frank, listening intently, thought he heard some sounds in the next room. He opened the closet door, and applying his eye to the aperture, saw two men seated in the room, one of whom was the man who had brought him there.

Eavesdropping is not exactly commendable, but Frank thought he was justified in his present circumstances in resorting to it. It was the only chance he had of learning the secret of his confinement. So he applied his ear to the opening, and heard the following conversation :

“I hear you’ve brought a boy here, Nathan,” said the other, who was a stout, low-browed man, with an evil look.

“Yes,” said Graves with a smile, “I am going to board him here awhile.”

“What’s it all about? What are you going to gain by it?”

“Well, it’s a little of a secret.”

“Can’t you trust me, man?”

“To be sure, Bob.”

“Out with it then.”

“You must know then that *somebody* is interested in the boy’s removal from New York.”

“That’s queer. What’s the boy done?”

“I don’t know fully. I only know he stands in somebody’s way.”

“Who’s somebody?” asked the other bluntly. “Out with it, man! I’m not going to blab.”

“Well, it’s John Wade,” answered Graves, with a little hesitation.

“Who’s he?”

“He lives up-town in New York with his uncle.”

“What’s the boy done to him?”

“The boy was getting to be a favorite with the old man, who is rich, and John Wade feared he might be crazy enough to leave him his property.”

“Is that it? Was the boy akin to the old man?”

“I don’t *know* that he was, but he may be. If he is, the boy don’t know it.”

“How can that be?”

“I’ll tell you all I know. I’ve known something of the family for a long time. John Wade employed me long ago. The old man had a son who went abroad and died there. His cousin, John Wade, brought home his son—a mere baby—the old man’s grandson, of course, and sole heir, or likely to be, to the old man’s wealth, *if he had lived*. In that case John Wade would have been left out in the cold, or put off with a small bequest.”

“Yes. Did the boy live?”

“No, he died very conveniently for John Wade, and thus removed the only obstacle from his path.”

“Very convenient. Do you think there was any foul play?”

“There may have been.”

“But I should think the old man would have suspected.”

“He was away at the time. When he returned to the city he heard from his nephew that the boy was dead. It was a great blow to him, of course. Now I’ll tell you what,” said Graves, sinking his voice so that Frank found it difficult to hear, “I’ll tell you what I’ve thought at times.”

“What is it?”

“That the grandson did not really die.”

“What! do you think he may still be alive?”

“I do,” said Graves. “That is, I think it possible. I think he may have been spirited off somewhere. Nothing more easy, you know. Murder is a risky operation, and John Wade is respectable, and wouldn’t want to run the risk of a halter.”

“You may be right. You don’t connect this story of yours with the boy you’ve brought here, do you?”

“I do,” answered Graves emphatically, “*I shouldn’t be surprised if this was the very boy!*”

“What, the old man’s grandson?”

“Yes.”

“Whew! That would be a discovery. What makes you think so?”

“First, because there’s some resemblance between the

boy and the old man's son as I remember him. Next, it would explain John Wade's anxiety to get rid of him. If he were only a cash boy, who had been employed to read to the old man, and happened to win his favor, he would not be dangerous to Wade's interests. Rich men don't adopt cash boys whom they pick up in the street and leave them fortunes—not often. It's my belief that John Wade has recognized in this boy the baby he got rid of fourteen years ago, and is afraid his uncle will make the same discovery."

"What are your instructions in regard to him?"

"I have not received final instructions. I am directed to keep him shut up for the present. I suppose Wade has not yet made up his mind about him."

"So you're the boy's guardian," laughed the other. "A nice guardian you'll make, Nathan."

Frank left the crevice through which he had received so much information in a whirl of new and bewildering thoughts.

"Was it possible," he asked himself, "that he could be the grandson of Mr. Wharton, his kind benefactor?"

CHAPTER XXXV.

FRANK AND HIS JAILER.



WHEN Frank came to compare what he had just heard with the death-bed revelation of his mother, he was led to regard such a supposition probable. It was probably John Wade himself who committed him to the care of Mr. and Mrs. Fowler, and then represented to Mr. Wharton that he was dead. The description which Mrs. Fowler had given of this man accorded with John Wade's appearance. The motive for the crime was apparent. It removed the only obstacle to Wade's succession to his uncle's vast estate, and from what Frank knew of him he was quite capable of such a piece of treachery.

If this supposition was the correct one, the treatment which he had received from John Wade was explained. He had recognized our hero by his resemblance to his deceased cousin, and dreaded that the discovery of his real claims to the favor which he had accidentally obtained might yet be made.

What was to be done?

This was the important question which our hero was called upon to solve, and he found it hemmed with difficulties. He was a mere boy, without money, and without friends or worldly experience. He had powerful enemies, as his present situation sufficiently proved—

enemies who would resist him desperately at every step. The prospect did not look encouraging, but our hero was not easily daunted. His courage rose with the occasion. He resolved to see Mr. Wharton and tell him the whole story, relying upon his former kindness and his sense of justice to give him fair play.

But before he could do this, it was necessary that he should escape from confinement. This he had satisfied himself he could do by breaking the windows and letting himself down to the ground. This, however, would be attended with considerable noise, and could not be effected in the night when a number of persons were in the house. He must wait till the next day.

The thought occurred to him whether he could not obtain the co-operation of the housekeeper, who evidently was not satisfied with her position or surroundings. He decided to make the attempt, first telling her his story and the plot which had been contrived against him.

From time to time he heard sounds in the next room, and peeping through the crevice saw three other men, all of suspicious appearance. The scraps of conversation to which he listened clearly showed that they belonged to the law-breaking class of the community.

While still in the closet he heard a noise at the door of his room. He hurried out and closed the closet door just in time to avoid the suspicion of Nathan Graves, who unlocked the door, and entering sat down and regarded our hero with a malicious smile.

“ Well, my lad,” he said, “ I hope you are enjoying yourself.”

“ You don’t expect I shall enjoy myself shut up here, do you?” questioned Frank.

“ Why not? You’ve got board and lodging here, with nothing on earth to do.”

“ That’s what I complain of.”

“ You want to go to work, do you?”

“ I would rather do the humblest kind of work than stay here in confinement.”

“ I am afraid you don’t appreciate my paternal care,” said Graves maliciously.

“ I don’t,” answered our hero bluntly.

“ Is there anything more I can do for you, youngster?”

“ There’s one thing you can do for me.”

“ What’s that?”

“ Let me out.”

“ Sorry to refuse you,” said Graves, crossing his legs and leaning back complacently, “ but you must ask something else.”

“ Why am I kept here? What is your object?” asked Frank directly.

“ Children are apt to ask too many questions. I can’t tell you.”

“ You mean you won’t.”

“ Oh, well, it comes to the same thing. Won’t! if you insist upon it.”

“ What advantage can you derive from my being here?”

“ That’s another question I can’t answer. Now suppose we turn the tables. I’ll ask you a few questions.”

“ I may refuse to answer.”

“ Of course, but you had better think twice and answer. Perhaps, after hearing what you have to say I may conclude to let you go.”

“ He wants to find out whether I am the boy he supposes,” thought Frank. “ Shall I answer his questions? Shall I let him know that he is right? No, it won’t do. It will only give him fresh reason to keep me here. If he thinks I am only a poor boy—the son of a country carpenter—he may conclude that there is no use confining me here.”

This passed through his mind in a moment. He answered, after a brief pause:

“ If you choose to ask questions, I will probably answer them.”

“ That is right,” said Nathan with satisfaction. “ What is your name?”

“ Frank Fowler.”

“ Where were you born?”

“ My parents lived in the town of Crawford, not very far from the city.”

“ What was your father’s business?”

“ He was a carpenter.”

“ Is he still living?”

“ No; he died some years ago.”

“ Is your mother living?”

“ She too is dead. She died a few months since.”

“ Humph! Have you any brothers or sisters?”

“ I have one sister—Grace.”

“ Where is she?”

“She is living in Crawford.”

“What made you come to New York?”

“I wanted to earn my living.”

“Was that your only object?”

“Yes; what other object could I have?”

“I didn’t know but you might have some relations in the city.”

“Not that I know of. I wish I had.”

“What did you find to do in the city?”

“I was a cash boy in a Broadway store. I told you that before.”

“Was that all?”

“For a little while I was employed to read to a wealthy gentleman up-town.”

“What was his name?”

“Mr. Wharton.”

Thus far Frank answered freely, as he was aware that Graves knew of his being with Mr. Wharton.

“How did you like Mr. Wharton?”

“Very much. He was very kind to me.”

“How did you get acquainted with him?”

Frank recited the circumstances.

“Why did you leave him as long as he was kind to you?”

“His nephew and the housekeeper accused me of stealing, and discharged me while Mr. Wharton was in Washington.”

“Was the charge a true one?”

“No!” exclaimed Frank indignantly. “I never stole in my life.”

"Of course not," sneered Graves. "Nobody is willing to own that he is a thief."

"If you mean to insult me, I shall answer no more questions," said Frank angrily.

"Well, I don't know that I have any more to ask. You needn't be angry, I will regard you as a paragon of virtue if you want me to."

"I am not a paragon of virtue, but I don't steal."

"All right, and all the better for you. Good boys die young, you know."

"I don't think you were ever in much danger," said Frank significantly.

The minute he said it he was sorry, fearing that Graves would be offended. But he only laughed.

"You've got a sharp tongue, boy," he said. "Never mind, I'll forgive you. The fact is, you have hit the nail on the head. I never was good enough to alarm my friends about my health. What was the name of Mr. Wharton's nephew who sent you away?"

"John Wade."

"I suppose you didn't like him much?"

"I have no reason to."

"I suppose he was jealous of his uncle's taking so much interest in you."

"Perhaps so. But it was mean to get up a false charge against me."

"So it was. But I must bid you good-night. I hope you'll have pleasant dreams."

"Will you let me go to-morrow?"

"Let you go?"

“Yes; from what I have told you, you can judge that there is no advantage in keeping me here. I am only a poor boy who wants nothing more than a chance to earn his living.”

“You don’t need to earn your living while you are here?”

“I told you before that I would rather earn my living in the humblest manner than be kept a prisoner.”

“I’ll take your request into consideration, my young friend,” said Graves, again smiling maliciously. “But the fact is, I’ve taken a fancy to you. I feel toward you like a father. I can’t bear to part with you.”

“It’s a strange way to show your fancy for me—to keep me locked up.”

Nathan Graves laughed.

“Well,” he said, “I’ll think of it, and let you know in a few days. Good-night.”

“I don’t intend to stay here a few days,” said Frank to himself as the door was closed and carefully locked by his jailer. “I sha’n’t be here to-morrow night if there is such a thing as getting away.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE ESCAPE.



IT was eight o'clock the next morning before Frank's breakfast was brought him. He had heard sounds, as of people walking about, for an hour previous, and rightly judged that the house-keeper had been under the necessity of waiting upon them first.

"I am sorry you have had to wait," she said as she appeared at the door with a cup of coffee, and a plate of beefsteak and toast. "I couldn't come up here before."

"I shall have the better appetite," said Frank. "Have the men gone away?"

"Yes."

"All of them?"

"Yes."

"Then I have something to tell you. Can you wait five minutes?"

"If you wish it."

"I learned something about myself last night. I was in the closet, and heard the man who brought me here talking to another person. May I tell you the story?"

"If you think it will do any good," said the house-

keeper; "but I cannot help you, if that is what you want."

"I will ask your advice at any rate," said our hero.

He told the whole story—first that which his supposed mother had revealed to him, next his connection with Mr. Wharton, and finally the purport of Nathan's conversation. As he proceeded the housekeeper betrayed increased, almost eager interest, and from time to time asked him questions, in particular as to the personal appearance of John Wade. When Frank had described him as well as he could she said in an excited manner:

"Yes, it is—it must be—the same man."

"The same man," repeated our hero in surprise. "Do you know him?"

"I met him once," said the housekeeper slowly.

"Do you know anything about him?"

"I know that he is a wicked man."

"Do you think I am right in suspecting that he has formed a conspiracy to defraud me?"

"Think so? I am sure of it!"

"How can you be sure? Do you know anything about it?" demanded Frank in surprise.

"I am afraid that I have helped him carry out his wicked plan, but I did not know it at the time, or I never would have given my consent."

"I don't understand you," said our hero, puzzled. "Will you tell me what you mean?"

"How old are you?" asked the housekeeper abruptly.

"Fifteen."

"Fourteen years ago I was very poor—poor and sick

besides. My husband had died, leaving me nothing but the care of a young infant, whom it was necessary for me to support besides myself. Enfeebled by sickness, I was able to earn but little, and we lived in a wretched room in a crowded tenement-house. My infant boy was taken sick and died. As I sat sorrowfully beside the bed on which he lay dead I heard a knock at my door. I opened it and admitted a man whom I afterward learned to be John Wade. He very soon explained his errand. He agreed to take my poor boy and pay all the expenses of his burial in Greenwood Cemetery, provided I would not object to any of his arrangements. He was willing besides to pay me two hundred dollars for the relief of my necessities. Though I was almost beside myself with grief for my child's loss, and though this was a very favorable proposal, I hesitated. I could not understand why a stranger should make me such an offer. I asked him the reason.

“ ‘You are in need,’ he said, ‘and I have the means of relieving you. Is that not sufficient?’

“ ‘I shook my head.

“ ‘ ‘I am sure,’ I said, ‘that you have some secret motive in doing me this kindness.’

“ ‘ ‘Perhaps I have,’ he answered. ‘Even if this is the case, it is none the less your interest to accept it.’

“ ‘ ‘I should like to know why it is that you befriend me?’ I said.

“ ‘ ‘You ask too much,’ he answered, appearing annoyed. ‘I have made you a fair offer. Will you accept it, or will you leave your child to have a pauper's burial?’

“That consideration decided me. For my child’s sake I agreed to his proposal and forbore to question him further. My consent obtained, he fulfilled his part of the agreement. The child was buried at Greenwood, the stranger and myself following as mourners. He provided a handsome rosewood casket for my dear child, but upon the silver plate was inscribed a name that was strange to me—the name of Francis Wharton.”

“Francis Wharton!” exclaimed Frank.

“Yes. I asked the meaning of this. He answered that I had no right to object, having consented to leave all the arrangements to his hands.

“‘Will it make any difference to your child,’ he said, ‘that it is buried under another name?’

“I was too weak and sorrowful to make opposition, and my baby was buried as Francis Wharton. Not only this, but a monument is erected over him at Greenwood, which bears this name.”

She proceeded after a pause:

“I did not then understand his object. Your story makes it clear. He wished to have it understood that Francis Wharton, whose life stood between him and a great inheritance, was dead. I think that you are that Francis Wharton, under whose name my boy was buried.”

“How strange,” said Frank thoughtfully. “I cannot realize it. But how did you know the name of the man who called upon you?”

“A card slipped from his pocket, which I secured without his knowledge.”

"How fortunate that I met you," said Frank. "I mean to let Mr. Wharton know all that I have learned, and then he shall decide whether he will recognize me or not as his grandson. It will be a hard fight, for John Wade is unscrupulous, and he will defeat me if he can."

"I will help you," said the housekeeper.

"You will?" exclaimed Frank joyfully.

"I will," she answered firmly. "I have been the means of helping to deprive you of your just rights, though unconsciously. Now that I know the wicked conspiracy in which I assisted, I will help undo the work."

"Thank you," said Frank, extending his hand, which the housekeeper took. "The first thing is to get out of this place. Can you help me?"

"I cannot open the door of your room. They do not trust me with the key."

"Then I must get out some other way. The windows are not very high from the ground. I can get down from the outside."

"You will fall and break your neck or your limbs," said the housekeeper shuddering.

She was a woman, and to her it seemed a formidable and dangerous undertaking.

"I am not afraid; I can swing off," said Frank, "but the windows are nailed down. That is the chief difficulty."

"Then you cannot get out."

"Yes I can. I can break the sash."

"Can I help you?"

“Can you give me a hatchet?”

“Yes, there is one below. Will a rope do you any good?”

“Yes; I can tie it to something in the room and let myself down. Then I shall avoid the danger of falling.”

“Will a clothes-line do?”

“Capitally.”

“I will bring you a clothes-line and a hatchet.”

She went below and quickly reappeared with the articles she had named.

Frank received them with exultation.

“Before I attempt to escape,” he said, “tell me where I can meet you in New York. I want you to go with me to Mr. Wharton’s. I shall need you to confirm my story.”

“I will meet you to-morrow at No. 15 B—— Street.”

“Shall I get you into trouble with the men here? I should not like to do that.”

“Do not fear. When I leave this house I shall not come back again. It has grown hateful to me. I came here because I had no other resource. Now I have seventy-five dollars which I have saved up from my wages. It will provide for me till I can get other employment.”

“Then we shall meet to-morrow.”

“Perhaps to-night. I shall wait an hour after you are gone and then I will go myself. Have you any money?”

“No,” answered Frank. “That is, I have only a few pennies.”

"I will give you five dollars. You will need money."

"I do not like to take it. You have but little yourself."

"You shall repay me when you are able."

"I will take it on that condition."

"You will not forget the number and street?"

"I have a paper and pencil. I will put it down. What shall I call your name?"

"Mrs. Parker."

"Thank you. I will get away as quick as possible, and when we are in the city we will talk over our future plans."

With the help of the hatchet, Frank soon demolished the lower part of the window. Fastening the rope to the bedstead, he got out of the window and safely descended to the ground.

Then with rapid step and but one backward glance, he struck across the fields. When he reached the highway he inquired for the nearest railway station. A long and fatiguing walk lay before him. But at last he reached the cars, and half an hour later the ferry at Jersey City.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

NATHAN GRAVES IS OUTWITTED.



RANK thought himself out of danger for the time being, but he was mistaken.

Standing on the deck of the ferry-boat, and looking back to the pier from which it had just started, he met the glance of a man who had intended to take the same boat, but had reached the pier just too late. His heart beat quicker when he recognized in the belated passenger his late jailer, Nathan Graves. The recognition was mutual. As Nathan caught sight of the boy, whom he had left in close imprisonment twenty miles away, he was tempted at first to doubt the evidence of his senses. But it was evident from Frank's surprised look that it was indeed he.

Carried away by his rage and disappointment, he clenched his fist and shook it at his receding victim. As, however, there were many passengers beside our hero on deck, no one knew that he was meant.

"The man is mad because the boat went off without him," said a man beside Frank laughing.

Frank laughed also, perceiving which Graves shook his fist more furiously.

"What a fool he is making of himself," said the first speaker.

Our hero, without undeceiving him, walked into the cabin. He wanted a chance to deliberate. He knew that Nathan Graves would follow him by the next boat, and it was important that he should not find him. Where was he to go?

He at once understood that he must not walk freely about the streets, as he would be in constant danger of recognition, and though Graves had no right to molest him he did not know to what length such an unscrupulous man might go. He might cause his arrest on a false charge of theft, and this would interfere with his plans.

Oh the whole, he decided to go at once to the address given him by the housekeeper, and there await her arrival, since he was not prepared to carry out his plans until she could co-operate with him.

Meanwhile Nathan Graves was in a state of equal rage, surprise and dismay.

"How could the boy have got away?" he said to himself. "I can't understand. I left the door fast locked, and I have the key in my pocket. Even if the housekeeper proved treacherous she could not open the door."

He thought of the windows.

"But the windows are securely nailed," at once occurred to him.

Speculate as he might, however, one thing was clear, the prisoner had escaped and he must face that fact.

"John Wade will be furious," thought Nathan. "I wish I could keep the matter concealed from him, but I don't dare to. He might meet the boy in the street. It

is better for me to let him know at once, and take the consequences. But first, I will walk about the streets and see if I can meet the young rascal. If I do I will get him into my hands again by fair means or foul."

Nathan Graves walked the pier with impatient steps waiting the arrival of the next boat. It never seemed so long in coming. The other boat he could see was nearly across. It was too far for him to distinguish the face or form of his late captive, even if the latter had not, as we have recorded, gone into the cabin.

But at last the boat arrived. A crowd entered, and with them Nathan Graves. But there was a still further trial of his patience. Six minutes elapsed before the boat had discharged its passengers and taken on board a fresh freight, and during this time Nathan paced the forward deck excitedly, looking over to the New York shore as if his unaided sight would enable him to track the movements of the boy of whom he was in pursuit.

"What the devil keeps them here!" exclaimed Nathan to himself. "Just when I am in the greatest hurry they wait longer than usual. How can I find that young rascal in the crowded streets of New York? While I am detained here he will have ample time to escape. Oh, if I had only been two minutes earlier, and taken passage on the last boat, I'd have given the young beggar a surprise. I'd have taught him to run away."

But the longest delays do not last forever. Fifteen minutes after Frank set foot on the pier his enemy also

landed. But now the difficult part of the pursuit began. He had absolutely no clue as to the direction which Frank had taken.

"I'll go up to Printing House Square," he decided. "He's as likely to go there as anywhere."

For an hour and a half he walked the streets in the immediate neighborhood of the square, but his labor was without reward. Not a glimpse could he catch of his late prisoner.

"I suppose I must go to see Mr. Wade," he at last reluctantly decided. "He may be angry, but he can't blame me. I did my best. I couldn't stand guard over the young rascal all day."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE PROGRESS OF THE CAMPAIGN.



HE ADDRESS which the housekeeper had given Frank was that of a policeman's family in which she was at one time a boarder. On giving his reference he was hospitably received, and succeeded in making arrangements for temporary residence.

He did not think it prudent to go out into the streets lest he might fall into the clutches of his pursuer, but waited till the arrival of the housekeeper, whose testimony, as corroborating his own, he felt to be of the utmost importance.

About seven o'clock Mrs. Parker made her appearance. She was fatigued by her journey, and glad to rest.

"I was afraid you might be prevented from coming," said Frank.

"I feared it also. I was about to start at twelve o'clock, when to my dismay one of the men came home. He said he had the headache. I was obliged to make him some tea and toast. He remained about till four o'clock, when to my relief he went up-stairs to lie down. I was afraid some inquiry might be made about you, and your absence discovered, especially as the rope was still hanging out of the window, and I was unable to do anything more than cut off the lower end of it.

When the sick man retired to his bed I instantly left the house, fearing that the return of some other of the band might prevent my escaping altogether."

"Suppose you had met one of them, Mrs. Parker?"

"I did. It was about half a mile from the house."

"Did he recognize you?"

"Yes. He asked in some surprise where I was going. I was obliged to make up a story about our being out of sugar. He accepted it without suspicion, and I kept on. I hope I shall be forgiven for the lie. I was forced to it."

"You met no further trouble?"

"No."

"I must tell you of my adventure, then," said Frank. "I came across the very man whom I most dreaded—the man who made me a prisoner.

"Nathan Graves?"

"Yes, if that is his name."

"How did you escape him?"

"He did not get hold of me, though he wanted to. He was just too late for the ferry-boat. I think I see him now standing on the pier and shaking his fist at me in rage," and Frank laughed at the picture he had conjured up.

Mrs. Parker did not laugh, but looked thoughtful.

"Since he knows you have escaped, he is probably on your track," she said.

"I suppose so."

"It will be hardly safe for you to go to Mr. Wharton's."

“Why?”

“He will probably think you likely to go there, and be lying in wait somewhere about.”

“But I must go to Mr. Wharton,” said Frank. “I must tell him this story.”

“It will be safer to write.”

“The housekeeper, Mrs. Bradley, or John Wade will get hold of the letter and suppress it. I don’t want to put them on their guard.”

“You are right. It is necessary to be cautious.”

“You see I am obliged to call on my grandfather—that is, on Mr. Wharton.”

“I can think of a better plan.”

“What is it?”

“Go to a respectable lawyer. Tell him your story, and place your case in his hands. He will write to your grandfather, inviting him to call at his office on business of importance, without letting him know what is the nature of it. You and I can be there to meet him, and tell our story. In this way John Wade will know nothing, and learn nothing, of your movements.”

“That’s good advice, Mrs. Parker, but there is one thing you have not thought of,” said our hero.

“What is that?”

“Lawyers charge a great deal for their services, and I have no money.”

“You have what is as good a recommendation—a good case. The lawyer will see at once that if not at present rich, you stand a good chance of obtaining a position which will make you so. Besides your grand-

father will be willing, if he admits your claim, to recompense the lawyer handsomely."

"I did not think of that. I will do as you advise to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

AT MR. WHARTON'S.



R. WHARTON sat at dinner with his nephew and the housekeeper. He had been at home for some time, and of course on his arrival had been greeted with the news of our hero's perfidy. But, to the indignation of Mrs. Bradley and John, he was obstinately incredulous.

"There is some mistake, I am sure," he said. "Such a boy as Frank is incapable of stealing."

"How do you know that, sir?"

"His face is sufficient proof."

"Appearances are deceitful," said his nephew shaking his head.

"I don't wonder you were deceived, sir," said the housekeeper. "He is so precious artful."

"I don't think so, Mrs. Bradley. To me he seems singularly frank and open."

"Seems is the right word, uncle," said John Wade. "I wouldn't believe it myself if proof were not so overwhelmingly against him."

"You may be mistaken, after all, John. Why did you not let him stay till I got back? I should like to have examined him himself."

"I was so angry with him for repaying your kind-

ness in such a way that I instantly ordered him out of the house."

"Did he admit the theft?"

"Not by no means, sir," said Mrs. Bradley. "He brazened it out like a young villain that he is."

"There is no occasion to call the poor boy names, Mrs. Bradley," said Mr. Wharton gravely. "I don't like it."

"Just as you please, sir," said Mrs. Bradley with a defiant sniff.

"I blame you, John, for your haste," said his uncle. "It was not just to the boy."

"Stupid old fool!" thought John Wade, but luckily for him his uncle couldn't read the disrespectful thoughts that were passing through his mind.

"I acted for the best, sir," he forced himself to say in a subdued tone.

"Young people are apt to be impetuous, and I excuse you, but you should have waited for my return. I will call at Gilbert & Mack's and inquire of Frank himself what explanation he has to give."

John Wade and the housekeeper exchanged glances. They knew that Frank was no longer cash boy in that store, and congratulated themselves upon it, as tending to prevent an interview which might militate against their plans. Under the circumstances they could not afford to oppose Mr. Wharton's whim.

"Of course, sir, you will do what you think proper," said his nephew. "Let me remind you, however, that thieves are not very apt to admit their guilt."

"I see you are prejudiced against poor Frank," said Mr. Wharton. "Don't be concerned, however. I am not liable to be deceived."

This ended the conversation, and Mr. Wharton, according to his declared intention, went to Gilbert & Mack's. He returned disappointed with the information that our hero was no longer in the store.

"Probably," suggested Mrs. Bradley, "he has been detected in theft there also."

"Mrs. Bradley," said her employer sharply, "I advise you to be more charitable."

"I beg your pardon, sir. I suppose you miss the boy's reading. He really did read very well. My nephew would be very glad to come and read to you on the same terms."

"Thank you. If I need his services I will tell you," said Mr. Wharton coldly.

"I am afraid poor Thomas doesn't stand any chance," said Mrs. Bradley to herself. "How he was took up with that boy, to be sure."

This last remark was made later to John Wade.

"My uncle is getting old and childish," said John. "I think he's breaking up, don't you?"

"Very likely, Mr. John."

"People of his age break up suddenly. They take strange and unaccountable whims, too, as my uncle has in the case of that boy. I wonder where he is, by the way?"

"You don't want to see him, Mr. John?"

"Not I. But I should feel relieved to think he was

out of the city. I shouldn't like to have my uncle meet him."

"Most likely he's gone back to the country where he came from."

"I hope so."

This conversation took place just previous to the arrangement with Nathan Graves, by which Frank was consigned to captivity.

I now return to Mr. Wharton at dinner.

"Here is a letter for you, sir," said the housekeeper. "It was brought by the postman this afternoon."

Mr. Wharton adjusted his spectacles and read as follows:

"No. — Wall Street.

"DEAR SIR: Will you have the kindness to call at my office to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock, if it suits your convenience? I have an important communication to make to you, which will, I think, be of an agreeable character. Should the time named not suit you, will you have the kindness to name your own time. Yours, respectfully,

MORRIS HALL."

"Read that, John," said his uncle, passing him the letter.

"Morris Hall is a lawyer, I believe, sir," said John. "Have you any idea of the nature of the communication he desires to make?"

"No idea at all."

"If it would relieve you, sir, I will go in your place," said John, whose curiosity was aroused.

"Thank you, John; but this is evidently a personal matter. I shall go down there to-morrow at the appointed time."

“I hope some old friend has left him a legacy,” thought the mercenary nephew, “as long as his fortune will soon come to me.”

He was far from suspecting that the communication related to Frank, though he had heard the day previous from Nathan Graves of the boy's escape. He had been very much annoyed, and had given his agent a severe scolding, with imperative orders to recapture the boy, if possible. The thought that Frank would consult a lawyer was far from entering his mind.

He saw his uncle leave the house the next day with equanimity, and soon after set out on an errand of his own.

CHAPTER XL.

JOHN WADE'S DISAPPOINTMENT.



T was not without a feeling of curiosity that Mr. Wharton entered the law office of Mr. Hall. He announced himself and was cordially welcomed.

"You have a communication to make to me," said Mr. Wharton.

"I have; but will you first permit me to ask you one or two questions?"

"Certainly."

"Did you not have a son who died about fourteen years since?"

"Yes, sir—my son George."

"He left a son—an infant."

"He did, but the infant survived him but a short time."

"Did you see the child die?"

"Why do you ask this?" said Mr. Wharton in surprise.

"Are you sure the child died?" asked the lawyer significantly.

"How can there be any doubt of it? I can point out his grave in Greenwood."

"But did you see him die?" persisted the lawyer.

"No, sir."

“How, then, do you know he is dead?”

“My nephew saw him die, and attended to the funeral while I was out of the country.”

“Your nephew, John Wade?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Another question, if you will permit me. Through the child's death was not your nephew left your sole heir?”

“What do you mean to suggest?” asked Mr. Wharton in agitation. “You would not have me think my nephew capable of——”

“Of putting your grandson out of the way,” said the lawyer, finishing the sentence. “By death, no. But I believe he has imposed upon you a false report of the child's death.”

“How can that be?” questioned the old man in bewilderment. “I have seen the grave with my own eyes.”

“I do not dispute it, Mr. Wharton; but I am prepared to *prove* that the boy who lies in that grave is not your grandson, but a stranger. Your grandson still lives.”

Mr. Wharton sunk into his chair in uncontrollable agitation.

“If this be true,” he said, “don't keep me in suspense. Tell me all without delay.”

“I will, sir. This is the communication I desire to make.”

The story of John Wade's treachery was told, and the means by which he had imposed upon his uncle, but the

lawyer carefully abstained from identifying the lost grandson with Frank Fowler.

When the story was concluded Mr. Wharton said:

“Where is my grandson—my poor George’s boy? Find him for me, and name your own reward.”

“I will show him to you at once, sir. Frank!”

At the word, Frank, who was in an inner office, entered. Mr. Wharton started in amazement.

“Frank!” he exclaimed. “My dear boy, is it you who are my grandson?”

“Grandfather!”

Mr. Wharton held out his arms, and our hero, already attached to him for his kindness, was folded in a close embrace.

“Now I know why it was that I became so much attached to you,” said Mr. Wharton. “It was because of your resemblance to my son—it was the tie of kindred, though I did not know it.”

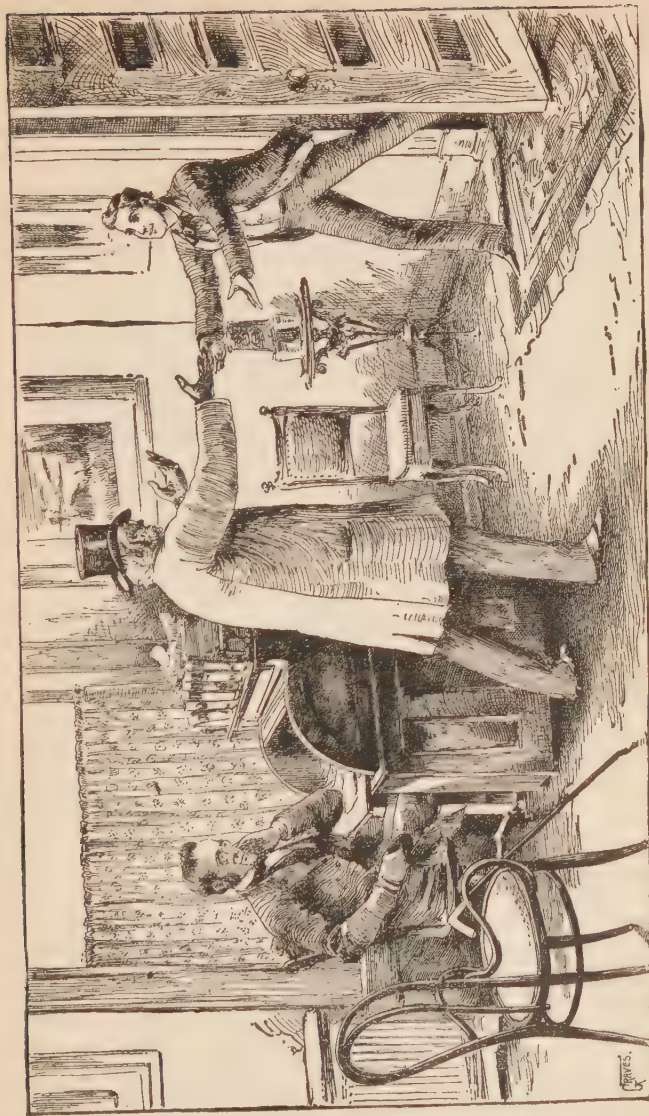
“Then you believe I am your grandson?” said Frank.

“I believe it without further proof.”

“Still, Mr. Wharton,” said the lawyer, “I want to submit my whole proof. Mrs. Parker!”

Mrs. Parker entered and detailed her part in the plot, which for fourteen years had separated Frank from his family.

“Enough!” said Mr. Wharton. “I am convinced—I did not believe my nephew capable of such baseness. Mrs. Parker, you shall not regret your confession. I will give you a pension which will relieve you from all fear of want. Call next week on Mr. Hall and you shall



“‘FRANK,’ HE EXCLAIMED, ‘MY DEAR BOY, IS IT YOU WHO ARE MY GRANDSON?’”

learn what provision I have made for you. You, Frank, will return with me."

"What will Mr. John say?" asked Frank.

"He shall no longer sleep under my roof," said Mr. Wharton sternly. "Come with me, and I will see you properly provided with clothes to suit your new position as my grandson and heir."

Frank was taken to a tailor and fitted out with a handsome new suit, ready-made for immediate use, while three more were ordered.

On the way Mr. Wharton stopped at Tiffany's and bought him an elegant gold watch and chain.

"How kind you are, grandfather," said Frank gratefully.

"I mean to make up to you for your fourteen years of poverty, my dear boy," said his grandfather.

When Mr. Wharton reached home he entered by a pass-key, and his arrival was not known to the household. He entered the library and rang the bell.

To the servant who answered, he said:

"Is Mr. John at home?"

"Yes, sir; he came in ten minutes ago."

"Tell him I wish to see him at once in the library. Summon the housekeeper also."

Surprised at the summons, John Wade answered it directly. He and Mrs. Bradley met at the door and entered together. Their surprise and dismay may be conjectured when they saw our hero seated beside Mr. Wharton, dressed like a young gentleman.

"Uncle," said John Wade, "I am sorry to see that

the boy, who abused your confidence and showed himself guilty of a contemptible theft, has had the effrontery to present himself here. You are too sensible, I am sure, to be misled by his plausible story."

"John Wade," said his uncle sternly, "the boy whom you malign, the boy you have so deeply wronged, has found a permanent home in this house."

"What, sir! you take him back?"

"I do. There is no more fitting place for him than the house of his grandfather."

"His grandfather!" exclaimed his nephew and the housekeeper in chorus, the former pale with consternation.

"I have abundant proof of the relationship. This morning I have listened to the story of your treachery. *I have seen the woman whose son, represented to me as my grandson, lies in Greenwood Cemetery.* I have learned your wicked plans to defraud him of his inheritance, and I tell you that you have failed."

"Sir," said John Wade, his features convulsed with passion, "you are the dupe of an outrageous imposition."

"I have been for fourteen years, John Wade. Now my eyes are opened. But your power to injure is gone. I shall make my will to-morrow, bequeathing all my property to my grandson, excepting only an annual income of two thousand dollars to yourself. You do not deserve this, but I will not throw you upon the world penniless. But no more conspiracies! *Should Frank die, the property will go to a charity, and your income*

ceases. His life is your only protection against poverty. And now I must trouble you to find a boarding-place. After what has passed I do not desire to have you in my family. I will make arrangements with my lawyer to pay you your income quarterly, and there will be no need of any personal communication between us."

"I did not think," said John, almost choked with rage and disappointment—"I did not think you would turn your nephew from the house."

"You will fare better than my grandson, who for fourteen years has lived in poverty."

"I do not believe he is your grandson," said John Wade, too angry to heed prudential considerations.

"Your opinion is of little consequence. My property will be bequeathed to him absolutely, without respect to relationship. Your doubts will not benefit you, nor would I advise you to dispute his claim."

"Then, sir, I have only to wish you good-morning. I will send for my trunks during the day."

"Good-morning," said Mr. Wharton gravely, and John Wade left the room, baffled and humiliated.

"I hope, sir," said the housekeeper, alarmed for her position—"I hope you don't think I knew Mr. Frank was your grandson. I never was so astonished and frustrated in my life."

"You may not have known it, Mrs. Bradley, but you are none the less culpable for entering into a wicked conspiracy to alienate my favor from him."

"Mr. John put me up to it; indeed he did."

"That does not exonerate you."

“I hope you won’t discharge me, sir—me that have served you so faithfully for many years.”

“You shall remain on probation. But if Frank ever has any fault to find with you, you must go.”

“Indeed, sir, he shall not,” said the housekeeper relieved. “I hope you will forgive me, Mr. Frank.”

“I forgive you freely,” said our hero, who was of a generous disposition.

“That is well,” said Mr. Wharton. “You may go, Mrs. Bradley. You have had a narrow escape. Let it serve as a lesson.”

CHAPTER XLI.

SUCCESS AT LAST.



MEANWHILE poor Grace fared badly at the poor-house in Crawford. Mrs. Chase, the matron in charge, was a coarse, ill-tempered woman, with tyrannical instincts, and made her life very uncomfortable. It was a sad contrast to the gentle and kindly family circle at Mr. Pomeroy's. What made it worse for Grace was, that she could hear nothing of Frank. She feared he was sick, or had met with some great misfortune which prevented his writing.

One day Sam Pomeroy came to the door of the poor-house and inquired for Grace. She heard his voice, and her heart leaped for joy at the prospect of seeing a kindly face. But she was doomed to be disappointed.

"Grace is busy," said Mrs. Chase shortly.

"Can't I see her?" asked Sam.

"I can't have her taken from her work?"

"Can't I see her five minutes?"

"No, you can't," said Mrs. Chase.

"Then you're a mean tyrant!" exclaimed Sam, out of patience.

"Am I?" shrieked Mrs. Chase in a rage. "Now you sha'n't see her at all. I'll never let you see her."

"I'll see her in spite of you, you mean old woman!" said Sam.

"Clear out, you impudent rascal!" exclaimed the mild-mannered Mrs. Chase.

"I'll have you turned out of your place," said Sam shaking his fist. "You'll repent this."

"Will I? I want to know. Leave here at once. Get out!"

"I go, but I return," said Sam theatrically.

Mrs. Chase returned to the kitchen in no sweet temper.

"Oh, where is Sam?" asked Grace.

"Gone!"

"Oh, why didn't you let me see him?"

"You shall never see him, the good-for-nothing ruffian. He'll swing on the gallows yet, the impudent reprobate!"

"Sam is a good boy," said Grace indignantly.

"Is he, hey? Don't say that again, or I'll beat you."

Poor Grace shed unavailing tears, and her captivity seemed even more intolerable.

The next day a handsome carriage drove up to the door. From it descended our hero, elegantly attired, and with a gold watch-chain conspicuously hanging from his watch-pocket. He knocked at the door.

Mrs. Chase, who was impressed by wealth, came to the door in a flutter of respect, induced by the handsome carriage.

"What do you wish, sir?" she asked, not recognizing Frank.

"Is Miss Grace Fowler at home?" asked Frank.

"Miss Grace Fowler!" repeated Mrs. Chase, alm

paralyzed at Grace being called for by such stylish acquaintances.

“Yes, my sister Grace.”

“What! are you Frank Fowler?”

“Yes. I have come to take Grace away.”

“I don’t know as I have the right to let her go,” said Mrs. Chase cautiously, regretting that Grace was likely to escape from her clutches.

“Here is an order from Deacon Pinkerton, Chairman of the Overseers of the Poor.”

“That is sufficient. She can go. You look as if you had prospered in the city,” she added with curiosity.

“Yes, I have found my grandfather, who is very wealthy.”

“You don’t say!” ejaculated Mrs. Chase. “I’ll tell Grace at once.”

Grace, at work in the kitchen, had not heard of the arrival. What was her surprise when Mrs. Chase, entering the room, said graciously:

“Go up at once, Grace, and change your clothes. Your brother has come for you. He is going to take you away.”

Grace almost gasped for breath.

“Is it true?”

“It is indeed. Your brother looks remarkably well. He is rich. He has found a rich grandfather and has come for you in a carriage.”

In amazed bewilderment Grace went up-stairs and put on her best dress, poor enough in comparison with her brother’s clothes, and was soon happy in his embrace.

“I am glad to see you, my dear child,” said Mr.

Wharton, who had accompanied Frank. "Will you come to the city and live with me and your brother?"

"Oh, sir, I shall be glad to be wherever Frank is."

"That is well said. Well, Frank, help Grace into the carriage."

"Good-by, my dear child," said Mrs. Chase, whose feelings were very much changed, now that Grace was a rich young lady. "Come and see me sometime."

"Thank you, Mrs. Chase. Good-by!"

The carriage rolled on.

"Why, there's Tom Pinkerton," said Grace, espying Frank's old enemy walking up the street.

Tom had heard the news. He was not pleased, but like Mrs. Chase he worshiped wealth, and it was reported that Frank was heir to a million. He hoped sometime to be invited to visit him in the city. So he took off his hat very deferentially, much to Frank's amusement.

"Is that one of your friends, Frank?" asked Mr. Wharton.

"He seems to be now," said Frank, "but there was a time when he thought very little of me. He isn't like Sam Pomeroy, who was my friend when I needed one."

"We must do something for Sam. Would you like to have him pay you a visit in the city?"

"There is nothing I should like better."

"Then he shall come."

A few words only remain. Our hero was placed at a classical school and in due time entered college, where he acquitted himself with distinction. He is now mak-

ing a tour in Europe. Grace was also placed at an excellent school, and has developed into a handsome and accomplished young lady. It is thought she will marry Sam Pomeroy, who obtained a place in a counting-room through Mr. Wharton's influence, and is now head clerk with a prospect of a partnership. His father received a gift of five thousand dollars from Mr. Wharton as an acknowledgment of his kindness to Frank. Tom Pinkerton holds a subordinate clerkship in the same house, and is obliged to look up to Sam as his superior. It chafes his pride, but his father has become a poor man, and Tom is too prudent to run the risk of losing his situation. John Wade draws his income regularly, but he is never seen at his uncle's house. He is bitterly jealous and envious of Frank, but all danger from him is at an end, owing to his uncle's shrewd arrangement by which his income terminates at Frank's death. Mr. Wharton is very happy in his grandson, and made happier by the intelligence just received from Europe of Frank's engagement to a brilliant young New York lady whom he met in his travels. He bids fair, though advanced in age, to live some years yet to witness the happiness of his dear grandson, once an humble Cash Boy.

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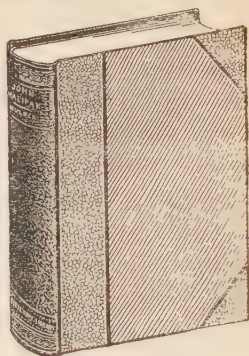
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